5STARLIT PRESENTS
CNA
T.H.O.T.S
QUAN MILLZ
MS. BAM

CNA T.H.O.T.s

Quan Millz

Ms. Bam

5StarLit

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Prologue

"…Temperature's rising
And your body's yearnin' for me
So, come here baby
Girl, lay it on me
I place no one above thee
Oh take me to your ecstasy…"

"Ohhh yeah, girl, just like that, keep goin' up and down on that muhfucka." The heavy and erotic groans emanating from Mr. Willie Barnes' dry 82-year-old mouth filled his bedroom, matching the sensual lyrics of Chicago's very own R. Kelly. His beady eyes were closed. His damp tongue loitered on the side of his mouth as a small stream of viscous drool ran down his chin.

"You like that, Mr. Barnes?" Schenay asked, smiling, as she rubbed her bare fat pussy lips up and down Mr. Barnes' growing shaft -- thanks to two ten milligram orange Cialis pills. The girl was saddled up right on top of Mr. Barnes as he lay in his bed. She gyrated her thick and jiggly brown hips on Mr. Barnes' exposed pelvis, toying with his hardening dick.

"Come on, go on ahead and put it in," Mr. Barnes begged, wanting Schenay to go ahead and slip his dick inside of her tight, juicy cooch.

"No, no, no!" Schenay teasingly replied, placing her finger onto Mr. Barnes' lips to shush him.

"Oh, you tryin' to play games wit da poosseh," Mr. Barnes lightly growled.

Schenay didn't respond. She just continued to move her hips to the rhythm of Kellz blaring in the background.

Mr. Barnes leaned forward, grabbed Schenay's right titty and began to suck on it like an infant needing its morning milk. "Goddamn, I loves me a nice titty to suck on," the old Alabama born-and-raised negro mumbled as his tongue twirled around her Ethiopian coffee brown bumpy areola.

Schenay, who just recently turned 24, did her best to keep a smile on her face, but deep down she was disgusted. Her skin crawled as she felt Mr. Barnes' tongue continue to dance around her tender breasts.

This was the third time this month she had sex with a man well into his eighties. But hey, it is what it is. Mr. Barnes was apparently a well-paying client who was collecting four checks a month -- a pension, social security, 401k and life insurance. He was willing to pay top dollar for a prime piece of pink pussy and Schenay was the right young bitch who was sourced to fulfill his nookie needs. Shit, besides, Schenay really had no choice. School tuition was due at the end of the month. Her sons' daycare bill needed to be paid. Car note due. Mortgage due. Hey -- that's life for you. A bitch gotta do what a bitch gotta do.

Schenay hoisted herself off Mr. Barnes' lip and turned around, now on her knees. She tooted her ass in the air and backed up into Mr. Barnes' face. "I did as you requested. I didn't wipe my ass or take a shower for two days."

"Oh shit," Mr. Barnes groaned. "Fresh booty butter. Let me get a whiff of it."

Following his command, Schenay comfortably sat her unwiped, unwashed ass and partly-soppy pussy meat on top of Mr. Barnes' face so he could dig his wide nigga nose deep into the crevices of her cheeks. Running his nose up and down her crack, he took in the aromatic mélange of pussy juice, partly crusted booboo, urine and a mix of other odors that ironically was arousing to the perverted senior citizen. Like the infamous porn star Brian Pumper, Mr. Barnes had a knack for smelling assholes.

As Schenay continued to cautiously sit and gyrate on Mr. Barnes' face as he continued to smell and lick her insides, the young mother was just counting down the minutes in her head until she was done. She glanced down and saw the obvious evidence that the Cialis pills were working wonders on Mr. Barnes' heavy, girthy dick. Old nigga had a tusk between his legs. In any other situation, Schenay herself would've been thoroughly thrilled with the sight of the monstrous dick. He loved big meat. But having to put 'old' meat inside of her was just absolutely disgusting. She huffed and rolled her eyes, still feeling the tip of Mr. Barnes' tongue and nose between her cheeks. "Hurry up, nigga," she thought to herself.

Mr. Barnes pulled his face out of Schenay's ass and slapped her right cheek. "Come on now, come ride the dick," he commanded. Following his instructions, Schenay proceeded to migrate her way down to Mr. Barnes' pelvis. She sat upright, in reverse cowgirl position. She lifted her bottom up and grabbed Mr. Barnes' rod with her right hand. She closed her eyes, took a gulp and inserted the meat inside of her. She was wet earlier, but her puss was a bit dry. She took the meat out, tilted her head down and drooled down to Mr. Barnes' dick tip. Saliva -- the world's first lubricant. She moistened up the

meat and proceeded to slip it back inside of her. A tad better. She closed her eyes once more and envisioned not the 82-year-old man, but Idris Elba. It was the perfect imagery needed to at least partly enjoy the experience.

"Ahhh, shit, you ain't like the rest of 'em. You got some good pussy," Mr. Barnes commented as he slipped out a groan. Schenay's walls conformed to the dick and she immediately went to work, taking in the meat, hopping up and down to make this old nigga nut within two minutes...hopefully. Sometimes old niggas had a way of lasting in the puss.

"Ahh, fuck, yeah, don't stop, grip the dick, bitch. Grip it!" Mr. Barnes let out a loud growl, holding firmly onto Schenay's waist as she jumped on the dick up and down, creaming all over his shaft.

"Damn, you cummin', you like the dick, don't you?" Old Man Barnes sniggered as she threw a slap across her jiggly ass.

"Hell yeah, it's good baby," Schenay somewhat lied.

As Schenay continued to work the geriatric peen, nausea entered her stomach. "You cummin' yet, bae?" she asked.

Barnes didn't respond, he just continued to let out pants through his whiskey-reeked mouth.

A few moments later, the strokes amped up, Mr. Barnes tightened his grip around her waist and dug faster and deeper into Schenay.

"AHH! AHHH"! Mr. Barnes growled.

"Finally…" Schenay thought as she felt Mr. Barnes' hands slip off her waist. Crazy thing was she didn't feel any semen shoot inside of her. But within seconds, Mr. Barnes began to let out a weird gurgling and choking sound. At first, Schenay didn't pay any attention to it. She just thought the old man was recovering from the orgasm. Schenay sat up and turned around and saw Mr. Barnes clasping his chest, trying his hardest to take in oxygen into his lungs.

It took Schenay a moment to realize what was going on, but suddenly her medical knowledge kicked in. Was he having a heart attack?!? Schenay scrunched her slightly sweaty face. "Mr. Barnes, you alright, what's wrong?" Bitch, he's dying! Suddenly her intuition slapped her into reality. This old dude was having some sort of cardiac event.

"Oh my god! Mr. Barnes! Mr. Barnes! Are you ok?!?" Schenay lunged at the man, staring into his pained face. His eyes were popped wide open, pupils staring directly into the slowly spinning bedroom ceiling fan.

"Oh my god!" Schenay quickly scanned the room, trying to assess what she was going to do next. Should she call someone? Call 9-11? Think quick, bitch!

She scuttled her naked body out of the bed and grabbed her cell

phone off the dresser over in the corner of the room. She then dashed back over to Mr. Barnes and in the twinkling of an eye, it was apparent his struggle for life was no more. His arms were spread out. His mouth hung open. Entire body now motionless.

"What the fuck?!?" the young hoe shrieked and she scanned Mr. Barnes. She threw two fingers to the side of the man's neck to check for a pulse. No pulse. She looked at his chest. No rising. He wasn't breathing. Was he dead? She looked down at her phone, unlocked it and immediately dialed 9-11.

"9-11, what's your emergency?"

"Umm, yes, I, umm…"

"Yes, hello? Is everything alright, ma'am?"

Schenay went silent. She then immediately hung up the phone. "Fuck that," she said to herself. She scanned the semi-dark bedroom and looked for her clothes. She threw her outfit on, grabbed her belongings and then quickly tidied up the room. She didn't want to leave any overwhelming evidence that something nefarious went down. "Get the money, where's the money?" That quick thought made her immediately realize getting her coins was more important than Mr. Barnes' welfare. She dashed over to his dresser and saw his fat, cash-stuffed wallet. She emptied out all of the hundred dollar bills in the wallet into her purse, threw the wallet back onto the top of the dresser and dashed out of his Westside apartment.

"Fuck that shit!" She'd be damned if she was going to get caught the fuck up. She made her way to her Altima parked on the side street, looked around, paranoid hoping someone did notice herself on the relatively quiet Garfield Park street. Chucking up the engine, she didn't hesitate to throw the car into drive and zipped down the street.

Chapter One

Cassie technically knew she was good and grown. Eighteen, and straight out of high school, she felt mature enough to make her own damn decisions and she didn't like anybody, not even her father trying to rule over her life. Shit, besides, with the way she let Kerron fuck her six ways from Sunday, she didn't need anyone telling her what she had to do with her body, let alone her life.

However, as she sat across from her father and stared straight into his unblinking eyes, trying her best to hold her own as he questioned her decision making and intelligence back and forth, she couldn't but still feel squeamish like she was six years old again.

Cassie figured she'd die a daddy's girl, always seeking some sort of validation from him, but it was time for her to stand up for herself. Cassie's daddy always told her she was the female version of him and he was right. You would have thought he'd carried her she resembled him so much.

She was in possession of toffee brown skin, perfectly shaped bowed lips and what her Mother liked to call bedroom eyes. The only features Cassie had been blessed with from her mom were her set of deep dimples and a full set of D cup breasts on an otherwise slim frame. Cassie guessed this was the perfect time for her Daddy to finally realize she wasn't the son he'd never had – even though he treated her as such.

Cassie was pregnant and against her father's wishes, she was keeping her baby. There was nothing he or Cassie's mother could say to sway her decision. Cassie sat across the table from him lips turned down, her arms folded tightly across her chest in defiance.

"Unfold your goddamn arms while I'm talking to you, young lady. I don't know what kind of dick this slick nigga laid on your ass that has you behaving so disrespectfully, but I am not the fuckin' one. You got me fucked up!" Her Daddy said slamming his fists to the table.

Cassie's arms immediately dropped to her sides, pulling her out of the silent reverie she was in.

"Look, I've thought long and hard about this inconvenience you've

just dropped in our lap, Cassie. The only solution to this problem and let me be clear Cassie...'cuz it is a goddamn problem, is for you to have an abortion. Now I've spoiled you all your simple life. You've never wanted for anything from the day you were born, but enough is enough. You're getting rid of it. That's final. You have all your life to have babies. Now is not the time."

"Daddy all my life you said we don't kill babies. You said you were against it," she said bewildered by her father's new stance on creating new life. Cassie had expected her parents to be upset. She had anticipated abortion being the solution to her perceived "problem".

Her father, Mr. Franklin Pierce, didn't go around broadcasting it because of how it would come across to the vast majority of Blacks, but he was a staunch Republican. Some of his thoughts and ideas were downright coonish to be quite honest but Cassie loved her father. None of his negative thoughts had ever affected her…until now.

Cassie sat there not only shocked by the words coming out of her Daddy's mouth but the hood tone suddenly his voice had taken. *I know shit's getting real now that Daddy has gone South Side Chicago on me,* the pregnant and somewhat defiant daughter thought to herself. Cassie's mother had told her stories about when her parents had just met. Even though her father was now part of the upper echelon of black elite in Chicago and Senior Vice President of DuSable Bank, the longest standing Black-Owned Bank conglomerate in Chicago, it hadn't always been that way. Franklin Pierce had truly been a rose that grew through the concrete.

From his humble beginning in the worst housing projects in the city, moving pillar to post with his heroin-addicted mother and younger brother, to the top of his graduating class at Temple University where he'd met and fell in love with her mother. This was a side of her father she wasn't used to being exposed to even though she was aware it did exist. Never towards her though. Cassie had been told all her life she was the light of her parent's life from the day she'd been born. A twinge of guilt did niggle at her at the thought of disappointing them, but she was in love.

Cassie looked at her Dad like he'd lost his goddamn mind. Maybe he thought it was 1958 and he had control of her body but that was so not the case. Cassie had every intention of keeping her baby. As many times as Kerron had been fuckin' her and saying he wanted her to have his child, her unborn baby was wanted and loved already.

Cassie didn't believe herself to be like other young women who found themselves pregnant and unmarried. Kerron really loved her and promised to marry her so they could be a family. Kerron was a man with honest intentions towards her. Had she ever felt otherwise, she would have never given herself to him. She knew her daddy didn't

want to hear that, but it was, what it was as they said.

"Daddy I'm not getting rid of my baby. How can you even think this way about your unborn grandchild?"

"Just how the fuck I said it! Cherelle, you better talk to yo goddamn daughter! Who the hell does she think is taking care of her baby? Not us. We pay the cost to be the boss. My black ass is trying to retire in three years. Not raise grandbabies. Now it's bad enough I agreed to let you waste my damn money getting this damn degree in "creative writing" whatever the fuck that is! But a baby too? Yous' a damn lie. This is a recipe for disaster and we're aborting the muthafuckin' mission! Literally. With a baby on your hip, you won't even get that sorry ass degree!" Cassie's father ranted now on his feet pacing the floor in front of her.

"Franklin, please calm down! We need to discuss this as a family. Let's not lose track of the fact this is our only child. Even if Cassie did need a little help, it's not like we aren't in a position to assist," Cassie's mother said. Cassie could always count on Cherelle Pierce to be the voice of reason in this house.

Franklin rolled his eyes and threw his head back.

"Is everyone in this damn house losin' their goddamn mind? This no-count ass black nigger is going to be locked up any day now and who will have their hand out? Yo mothafuckin' ass! I'ma tell you exactly how your young, dumb, donkey brain ass is going to be looking. Like a muthafuckin' fool, that's how! That low life ass street nigga ain't gonna do nothin' but bring yo young, dickmatized ass down. You're too blind to see it 'cuz the dick got you in a daze!" Franklin continued to rant, "And you know what's more disappointing to me? Not the fact you're out here spreadin' yo goddamn legs open – Oh, I see, I resigned myself to the fact that one day you were gonna give some nigga the pussy. That had to happen sooner or later. But what has me fucked up is the fact that out of all the opportunities your mother and I have given you, you should at least return the favor by giving yo coochie to a real nigga who's about something, educated, a good family, a career. Out of all the young men you could have hitched your wagon to, you chose that thug ass bum nigga? All your life we've worked hard to position you to meet a man of means. This is the best nigga you could get knocked up by? I need all my goddamn money back for the sweet 16 party, the damn cotillions and every damn thing else! Shit, Cherelle we could have just let her hang out at the Boys and Girls Club, or the YMCA! Yup! Yo mothafuckin' ass is dickmatized. Voodoo dick. That thug nigga got a spell on yo ass! I never thought a daughter of mine could be so stupid!"

Cassie sat at the solid oak wood table with a quiet rage building up inside of her. She'd always known her father was no fan of Kerron, but

now it just seemed like he couldn't wait to throw it up in her face the second Kerron was in a little trouble. But guess what? She didn't care. She was going to ride with her nigga until the wheels fell off.

Unbeknownst to Cassie, her father had used his connections at the bank and ran a credit check on Kerron. She had just found out tonight Kerron was mixed up in a few situations she hadn't been aware of. But it wasn't anything worth leaving him over. Especially now that she was with child. Cassie looked over to her mother for some sign of support.

"Franklin, baby, calm down, please! You didn't need to say all of that like that! You're rushing to judgment here! This is our only child. We can't throw her or our grandchild into the streets. We need to see Cassie through this. Help her get that degree. Lots of single women do it," Cherelle screeched as she did her best to plead with her husband of twenty-four years.

Franklin, well, he was as hard-headed as their only child, unfortunately. Cherelle knew for her damn self it would be hell getting Franklin to help their daughter financially. She couldn't honestly say she didn't agree with every word coming out of Franklin's mouth. She felt it in her bones her child was making a mistake and bringing unnecessary hardship into her life.

Cassie was book smart but naïve to a lot of things. Motherhood was going to give her ass a real rude awakening. Unlike her husband though, Cherelle was well aware that the situation was out of her hands.

Cherelle had a thriving career as an advertising executive herself and had no notions of baking cookies and hosting sleepovers any time soon either. But what another woman did with her body was none of her business. Cassie was going to have to pull up her big-girl panties and live with the consequences of her choice to become a young, uneducated, penniless single black mother – another typical, stereotypical statistic in Chicago.

"Yeah. Dumb single women. Why the hell would you willingly lay down and have a child by a jailbird instead of moving on with your life? That boy has one foot inside the penitentiary doors! Have a child with a man who can provide and take care of his family. This young nigga is liable to have two or three other babies on the way you don't even know about. If he doesn't have any already. What number baby mama are you exactly? Don't be a fool, young lady. Because if you decide to keep that baby and walk out of this door, it will be locked! Do you hear me? Ain't no revolving door over this way. Me and ya' mama's baby days are over! Do you hear me? OVER!" Her dad roared slamming his hands down on the table.

"Well, daddy I guess you made yourself clear. I'm not getting rid of

Kerron's baby. I'll be out of your house tonight," Cassie replied leaving the table and running to her bedroom locking the door behind her. Although a part of her knew her father and mother had good intentions, she was just so hurt that they were being so unforgiving and crude. With tears running down her face, she confident though she and Kerron were going to make it. Despite her father's objections and his coonish perceptions of Kerron, they were going to make it one way or another.

Chapter Two

Cassie pulled her cell-phone out of the back of her skin-tight Fashion Nova jeans and punched in Kerron's number. After several rings, Kerron answered. She could barely hear him with the loud music and voices in the background.

Where in the fuck was he at on a Tuesday night? Cassie wondered. Wherever he was, it was lit. Why hadn't she been invited? In the six months Cassie had been dating Kerron, Cassie had gone from a suburban black American princess to a faux trap queen away from her parents' watchful eye. Truth be told, the hood lifestyle had always somewhat appealed to her. It was one of the reasons she loved her favorite cousin Denise so much. Granted, Denise grew up down south, Jackson Mississippi to be exact, and it was a lifestyle totally different from her own. During summer visits to Jackson, Denise knew everyone in town and escorted her big-city cousin to party after party filled with young, sexy thugs and drug dealers. The fascination with them never seemed to escape her.

"Kerron? Can you hear me?"

"Yeah, girl Wassup?" Kerron asked with laughter in his voice.

"I told my parents. They know," Cassie said. She was now fully relieved to have what she felt like was the hardest conversation over with. It hadn't gone in her favor but at least she wasn't hiding her pregnancy anymore.

"Know about what?" Kerron asked.

"The baby Kerron!"

"Oh yeah shit. I damn near forgot about that baby my damn self," Kerron said laughing. Cassie's eyes bucked, and she held the phone away from her ear staring at it in disbelief.

"What did you say, Kerron?"

"Aww, damn girl don't take it like that. You know I love you and the baby. I'm just saying it's so early, it's not like anyone can tell you're pregnant anyway," he said with a laugh escaping his lips. "All right my nigga!" Cassie heard him call out to someone.

"Well look, my daddy is putting me out of his house…like tonight

since I'm not having an abortion. I need to come stay with you." Cassie stated.

Now was the time she definitely needed Kerron to man up and come through for her and the baby. But she was one-hundred percent certain he would. After all, every time they were together he'd blow her head up about them getting a place together. Now was the time to show and prove he was a man of his word.

"Aww damn baby girl. You know I stay with two of my boys. I'd have to run that by them first off and it's really not the right environment for a pregnant woman to be in," Kerron replied with his voice tight.

"No, nigga you better do something…," Cassie started getting wound up. Not only was she pissed but her feelings were genuinely hurt behind his words.

"What? Yo, you better slow yo muthafuckin' roll talkin' to me like that, Cassie. I'm your man. What the fuck is wrong witchu? Now just admit you fucked up! So worried about people knowing yo ass is pregnant you couldn't keep your damn mouth shut. As tiny as you are, we could have kept the pregnancy between us until you were probably five or six months pregnant. You could have been laid up and comfortable while I stacked some money to get us a place. You just found out last week. What was the rush?"

Cassie's eyes filled with tears. She couldn't believe this shit.

"I didn't want to lie to my parents…"

Kerron smacked his teeth through the phone. "Man, you lie to them about everything else. What was the big deal now? Look I need to talk to my niggas about you living over there full time, but I can tell you right now it's probably gonna be an issue. You know how I move around anyway and Melo just lets me crash for a few dollars here and there. Call Porscha's fat ass and see if you can stay with her for a little while. I need to work on getting us a place. I need a couple weeks to get a few stacks together," Kerron said.

Cassie didn't want to make him mad, so she just chose to suck it up…for now. Her and Kerron definitely had to discuss this later because this conversation didn't go at all how Cassie expected it too. Kerron had her head blown up now for months. She thought he could do no wrong. He'd told her out of his own mouth she was the Bonnie to his Clyde. The Beyonce to his Jay-Z. Now the second she needed him the most here she was dangling in the wind. It must be the liquor talking because this was not her man talking.

"Okay I'ma go to Porscha's place but Kerron, that is not going to last long so you need to be getting us a place. We're in this together and I'ma do my part as your woman. I don't expect you to do everything," Cassie said softly.

Nothing would be accomplished if they were at each other throats and she turned into a crazy baby mama before the baby was even born. Cassie wanted him to know she was as down for him as day one and that the baby wasn't already being placed before him. She'd seen too many females do that and lose their man in the process. It wouldn't be her.

"I'll call you once I get settled in over at Porscha's," Cassie lowly uttered before they quickly ended the call. She could still hear her parents going at it downstairs. Maybe Kerron was right? She should have kept her damn mouth shut for as long as possible while her parents took care of her. Oh well, what's done is done. Besides, after some of the things her father had said to her tonight, she doubted their relationship would ever be the same.

Cassie immediately began throwing anything she could into a large duffle bag. She hoped the items she was grabbing were even useful. All she knew was she needed to have a swift getaway. There had been enough drama for the night. The only thought racing through her mind was getting away from the house in her 2013 Nissan Altima before her dad thought to keep it away from her. After all, he was still paying the note on it and he was not happy with her right now. If she didn't have transportation she'd really be screwed. Public transportation in Chicago, while better than most cities, still sucked, especially since she hadn't grown up having to rely on it and now she needed a job.

Cassie wouldn't be able to make any real moves without a car. Once she'd stuffed as many clothes as she could in her bag, she stopped quickly, assessing the situation. *Nah, let me get some more shit because my dad sounds mad as hell, ain't no telling when he's going to let me back up in here*, she thought to herself.

Cassie grabbed another bag and quickly threw her collection of wigs and ponytails in the bag. Shit, a bitch might be technically homeless, but she damn sure ain't gon' look like it. Granted she'd been blessed with a full head of hair, she still loved wearing long dramatic weaves to switch up her look. Jesus Christ! She'd almost forgotten her most prized possession. Cassie reached into her nightstand and grabbed her journal. All of her important thoughts and visions for the future were written inside. Then she also grabbed her own personal bible. Once she got her shit packed, she crept to the door and could still hear her parents arguing about her loudly. Each one blaming the other about how badly she'd turned out. She felt like shit but what was she supposed to do? From what her daddy was saying, the only thing that would make the situation right for him would be for her to kill her baby and that wasn't going to happen. Cassie grabbed her shit and was out the door before they would even notice she was gone.

"Bitch, open the damn door. It's cold as hell up in here!" Cassie said to herself looking around the corridor of her best friend Porscha's apartment building. *Damn! Why aren't the hallways heated?* She thought, slightly shivering. Maybe they were, but the security door was propped open with a brick when she'd walked up. *I hope that shit ain't broken,* she quickly thought again. After all, if Cassie was staying here she wanted it as safe as possible. Aside from the questionable security situation, the apartment complex was unbelievably fucking filthy. As many times as Cassie had been over to Porscha's apartment, she'd never paid much attention to the surroundings…until now.

Porscha had been staying at a two-story apartment building over on 71st and Cottage Grove Ave with her mother and a few of her siblings. But because her mother was in and out of the house, usually staying with some random ass nigga, Porscha was pretty much in control over the apartment. That was also a reason she had no qualms of having Cassie stay with her for the time being.

Cassie had been too geeked that her bestie actually pretty much had her own place. It was the perfect spot to chill, drink and smoke good ass weed – none of which she'd dare do under her parents' roof. However, now that this obviously roach-infested apartment building was about to be her new residence and she wouldn't be leaving in two or three hours to her house in the suburbs, she was getting very apprehensive about her decision of trying to do this shit all on her own. All of sudden, some things were becoming clear now and she wondered if she should've just listened to her father all along. Crazy how when you see some real shit, it can make you change your mind in a heartbeat. Still waiting for Porscha to answer her damn door, Cassie's couldn't stop the overwhelming smell of urine, alcohol, and cigarettes from invading her nostrils. All her damn nose hairs were standing at attention. Damn! Were niggas just walking to their apartment and deciding to stop and pull out their dicks to piss right in the hall or what? she thought.

Although the apartment complex wasn't the projects like Cabrini Green or Ida B. Wells, which were some of the most notorious housing projects in the city, Cassie thought her bestie's apartment was no better. Newspapers and old mail littered the hall. Discarded Harold's Chick Shack boxes were all over. Every other three feet, Cassie saw used condoms, syringes and the blunt roaches. This was too much, but at this point, Cassie had no other choice to but to accept this place as her new home if she was going to keep her baby and make her relationship with Kerron work.

Finally, the door cracked. It seemed like she'd been in the hall ten

minutes as opposed to the two minutes she was actually waiting but still.

"Bitch, get in here. Don't talk too loud though, Montez is in the bedroom asleep. He just got done dicking me down good and proper! Your ass is lucky I even picked up the phone when you called and said you were on the way," Porscha laughingly growled walking into the kitchen stifling a laugh.

Cassie looked around her bestie's apartment with fresh, judgmental eyes.

Damn, it's run down as hell up in this muthafucka too! Shit and I gotta lay on that greasy looking futon? Cassie thought to herself as she shook her head. She swallowed the little bit of pride she had left and bit her tongue and stifled a groan. Furthermore, what use would it do her to put down the only friend she had in her corner? The last place she wanted to end up was a shelter. It appeared that would be her last option since Kerron wanted to act like she wasn't welcome where he was. As Cassie continued to take in her surroundings, she thought about just going straight to Kerron's house, showing the fuck up like, "Here I am, nigga!" Shit, truth be told, she felt like she had the right to do that if she was his woman. But Cassie didn't want to rock the boat. She was sleepy and hungry right now. It seemed as if the second she actually knew she was pregnant, her unborn child was already wreaking havoc on her body. All she craved was Chick-Fil-A, Ben & Jerry's Peanut Butter Cup Ice Cream and Lou Malnati's deep dish pizza with extra sausage and onion. The food cravings mixed in with the taking in the squalor fucking with Cassie's head big time but she had to maintain her composure and just see through the night.

"Hoe, you got something to eat for me?" Cassie asked as she set down some of her bags she'd struggle to carry in. Her arms were killing her, and she hoped there was something decent and greasy in the fridge or microwave for her to munch on.

"Bitch, no. The only thing I was eating was dick. You should've thought about that before you ran your ass down here!"

Cassie smacked her teeth and rolled her eyes. "Girl, whatever. Anyways, you know I really appreciate you coming through for me, right? Now you said you could get me a job being a customer service rep with you at Total Service Solutions, right? You know I've never had a job before. Do you think they'll hire me?

"Girl, I told you I got you! Don't even worry about it. They gonna make sure you get on. They need people bad. As long as you can pass the background check you're in there. Watch what I say. Plus, once you get there, you already know I'ma show you everything you need to know to make it there. I'ma show you all the tips and shit, how to hang up on these people, put they ass on hold while you eat…. don't

worry, I gotchu!"

"Damn Porscha! Is that how you treat the customers?" Cassie asked perplexed. Hell, she was trying to keep a job not get fired right off the bat.

"Hell yeah! Girl, it's easy but hectic at the same time. They time you every second you're logged in. How long you take if you gotta piss. How long you on a break. Then, those muhfuckas only give you a thirty-minute lunch break, which ain't shit. So, you gotta know how to work that shit just to keep your sanity. You know I told you we take calls from the state from people about their benefits, right? Food stamps, Medicaid all that so believe me when I say, these muhfuckas will work your last nerves. Some of them deserve to get hung up on!" Porscha said walking over to the table where Cassie sat chewing on a piece of gum she'd pulled out from her purse earlier.

Cassie silently popped her gum mulling over her situation. Times like this made her feel like her father was right. Maybe she needed something more than a creative writing degree to support her and her child in the future. Here she was about to be a college freshman and was having to resort to working at a call center. On the verge of starting classes at Chicago's only HBCU, Chicago State University, she figured the money she'd make at the call center combined with Kerron helping her out would be enough to help cover tuition and books. Then, she didn't anticipate her degree being as difficult as something like accounting or nursing, so she could breeze through her classes and possibly work as much overtime at the call center to stack up even more money in her bank account. The more Cassie pondered her future situation, the more she quickly quelled her anxiety about what was going to happen over the coming months. *As long as I'm working I'll be good.* Cassie finished took the gum out of her mouth and threw it away. She got up and made her way back into the kitchen to get a glass of water. Once she did that, she made her way back into the living room where Porscha was idly watching TV.

"Well, I know I'mma be good, but I need this bad. Girl, my daddy don't want to help me at all. He's just on straight bullshit"

Porscha looked over at her and started snickering.

"Bitch, why you look scared? I told you I got you! Just worry about them college classes. Trust and believe me, those tests they finne give you at the call center ain't shit. That's just their way to weave out dumb niggas and bitches. Oh, and the training, girl – it ain't shit. I told you I know the hiring manager, so you good. You gon' get on. I gotchu. I mean I know you don't be believing me when I tell you, but I got you! I'm damn near running a team myself. This will be just what you need to get on your feet before this baby comes. Plus, during training, you get paid weekly, so I'm sure that will help you

out a lot. Now don't get mad at me for asking but, are you sure you really wanna have it? Kerron might be doing some big time if he don't stop selling drugs. Now that y'all have a baby on the way he really needs to stop that dumb shit and go legit. Maybe Montez can see if they're hiring at the Post Office where he work at. It's a decent, steady job."

Hearing Porscha question if she should have the baby still made Cassie zone out. She grew a bit livid. Fuck the advice her bestie was trying to give her, the only thing she heard was Porscha asking was she going to kill her baby. Cassie once again shook her head and thought that was what was wrong with the world today. Everyone thought an abortion was their damn birth control instead of acting like real women. Not to mention the fact, her baby was planned. People were really gonna learn to stop putting their negativity onto her and her unborn child.

"YES! You know I love that nigga. I can't even think about killing his baby."

"Well, you know fat bitch Shanaya talking about she's pregnant for him too right?"

Cassie's eyes bucked.

"That ugly fat bitch is a goddamn lie! Kerron wouldn't touch her pussy with Montez's dick!" Cassie hissed loudly.

"Oh no, bitch, don't bring my man's dick into this. I was just telling you what the word on the street was. I know y'all been kicking it for what? Five months."

"It's been six!"

"Shit, that doesn't sound any better. I'm just offering you some options, boo. 'Cuz a baby will damn sure show a nigga's true colors, so we're about to see what Kerron is made of. Truth be told, I'm shocked."

Porscha was really starting to get on Cassie's nerves. She came over here for a soft place to land in her time of need, not to be lectured by someone who was stuck in a bad relationship herself. Montez did have a steady job and helped Porscha out sometimes when she needed it, but he wasn't perfect. And he wasn't as fine as Kerron either. Cassie lowkey thought Porscha was a tad jealous because she'd been mentioning wanting a baby her damns self. Apparently, she and Montez had been trying. They'd been together four years, but all of sudden, lo and mothafuckin' behold, here came Cassie pregnant than a muhfucka after only being in a relationship with a nigga for six months. Her ass was fertile as hell.

"Look I'm not trying to piss you off, I just don't feel like I'd be doing our friendship any justice if all I did was go along and dick-ride. That's not what I do. I gave you the tea. Do with it what you will.

Now let me go get you some blankets to lay on the futon. I really don't like people laying all up in my shit. But since you my girl, I'ma make an exception," Porscha grumbled before walking down the hall.

Cassie was glad she left when she did because by the expression she now had on her face, Porscha probably would've kicked her out. Cassie looked around once more, just noticing how everything in here was raggedy as fuck. Including the futon. Out of all the times Cassie had been coming over here, she had been so oblivious to just how nasty this place was. She couldn't believe she was that damn blind to see how filthy the place was. She knew the place and the area was the hood, but god damn, shit seemed like it had gotten worse. The thing that had Cassie fucked up though was how Porscha was kind of acting like this was a luxury living room set she was allowing Cassie to lay on. Cassie, still scanning the room just thought, "*I mean, I guess"*. Her eyes tried their best to adjust to the dimly lit room.

"Here you go, girl," Porscha said walking back into the living room carrying a pile of what Cassie prayed were clean linen. *Cassie, you better stop! You've known this girl for six years. You know she's clean*, she thought.

"Porscha, I ain't trying to be funny but I thought I saw something moving," Cassie swore out the corner of her eye she saw a roach or some other critter moments ago.

"Oh yeah, girl. One of these raggedy ass hoes in the building brought in some mice. They're supposed to come over and take care of it this week. I wouldn't be shocked if one or two got in. But mice ain't shit. Don't bother them, and they won't bother you. Night girl! Get some sleep. I'ma take you by the office in the morning to get you hooked up with a job at Call Solutions.

Chapter Three

Three Months Later...

"*I'm tired as fuck*," Cassie grumbled and shook her head as she lugged two bags of groceries from Jewel-Osco to the front door of her apartment.

Kerron had finally come through on his promise to move them into their own place. Crazy thing though was that she had to talk some serious cash shit to get him to follow through on his promise. His reluctance and lack of steadfastness were somewhat of a reflag for her; a sign some tribulation was bound to enter their relationship.

Nonetheless, after getting the apartment on 87th street, which wasn't too far away from the Chicago State University campus, Cassie subsided her fears and became super-confident that her and Kerron could move forward with their plan of finally being a real family, not dependent on anybody, not even their closest friends.

Cassie had just about worn out her welcome with Porscha when Kerron finally gathered up the coins needed to move them into a two bedroom apartment. Shit, Cassie was honestly shocked it had taken the nigga so long too. From the second she'd started dating Kerron, he always seemed to have money. Paid for them to go out to eat and everything. Granted during those early stages she never needed him to provide her with things, her parents saw to it she had the finest of everything, but those days were long gone. The relationship with her parents was cordial at best.

In the last six months, Cassie had attended three Sunday dinners and those had been a disaster. It seemed like the more her stomach swelled with life, the angrier her Daddy became. His words to her were short and clipped and he never looked her in the eyes. She left feeling more depressed than when she'd arrived. So, she hadn't gone at all the last month. Instead, she chose to occasionally to meet her Mom for quick dinners either at a local Red Lobster or Olive Garden. Her mom's treat of course; her money was tight as hell. Tighter than virgin cooch.

At the time of her moving out, her friendship with Porsha was hanging on by a thread due to the stress of living and working together. Porscha would make little comments here and there, telling Cassie she was infringing on her dick appointments. Also, once Porscha's mother stopped being an old hoe in the streets and came back home, her mother felt a certain type of way.

Ms. Marquetta, as everyone called her, felt Cassie was too privileged, stuck up and spoiled and she needed to woman the fuck up and get her own shit. Although Cassie and Porscha were longtime BFFs, Ms. Marquetta always had subtle disdain for Cassie and her family. It was nothing but envy – she was always lowkey jealous of Mrs. Pierce and her husband.

But now that Ms. Marquetta was back home after breaking off an off-and-on relationship with one of her sugar daddies, she observed how Cassie was relying on her daughter for a place to stay, so she used the opportunity to let her secret envy and jealous of the girl and her family to drive a wedge between the girls. When Cassie wasn't around, Ms. Marquetta would tell Porscha Cassie was a stuck up boujee bitch and that if push came to shove, she could always run back home. She even told her how should sense how Cassie looked down upon them and their living situation – which was partly true. Nonetheless, by the time the tension grew super-thick and was bound to explode at any day, luckily, Kerron stepped in and got the apartment.

Finally upstairs, tired ass Cassie paused for a moment to gather herself. She was breathing heavily and leaned against the door taking her hand and rubbing it against her heavy nine-month pregnant belly.

When Cassie visualized herself getting pregnant, she always thought she'd be cute with a round baby belly like so many women she'd see on television or on magazines. But not her! Cassie didn't know how she would end up looking by the time she gave birth.

Due at any minute, Cassie, truth be told, looked a hot mess. Her nose seemed to be spread all across her face. Had her a 1970's pre-nose job Michael Jackson spicy, pimpled up bell pepper nose. The stress of dealing with school, carrying a baby, working (sometimes working lots of overtime shifts), her parents, her relationship and just life shit, in general, had placed the darkest circles under her eyes. Her teeth even spreading and shifting, and now she was contemplating that after birth, she may need to get braces.

Although she was carrying baby weight, Cassie had put on at least a good sixty pounds, wobbling her body into a shape she'd never thought she'd have at the age of almost nineteen. Another thing that was bothering Cassie was that her edges were beginning to disappear. A few of her classmates, who were mothers themselves, told her

ninety percent of her symptoms would disappear after she gave birth and that her body would snap back into shape if she exercised, ate healthy, got sleep and would just relax. However, as much as she wanted to believe them, Cassie couldn't believe their advice – her appearance was definitely fucking with her head.

Crazy as it may seem, even with Cassie feeling down about her self-image, Kerron would always assure her and say she was exaggerating and that she was more beautiful than ever now that she was carrying his seed. Were these lies? That was what Cassie thought every time Kerron would laugh and say that shit to her. But then again, the more Cassie looked bigger, the more it seemed like Kerron wanted to fuck her more and more.

Before Cassie entered her apartment, she looked in the apartment complex's parking lot and saw Kerron's car parked outside. "Ughhh," she panted, already dreading looking in his face. It seemed like every time Kerron laid eyes on her, his dick got hard. Most women worried about things like that. Their man still being attracted to them or cheating, but with Cassie, that seemed to not be a concern. But she was ready to give the whole sex thing a rest. She could barely breathe. Cassie was so big in fact, the thought of sex for at least the last month disgusted her. Where the hell were all these pregnant hoes getting the energy to be fuckin' at? She knew damn well they were lying. Gotta be! She thought.

Cassie could barely keep her damn eyes open these days. General fatigue coupled with school and work had her body dragging 24/7. Then, you throw in a nigga like Kerron who seemed to have this weird type of pregnant pussy fetish and wanted to fuck all the time. It was crazy too because Cassie thought how strange it was now that she was pregnant, it seemed like the nigga was on her more now than he'd been their entire relationship. *I guess if this nigga really wants some pussy tonight I'ma have to go ahead and give it to him. Maybe I'll just suck his dick*, she thought pissed the fuck off. *I'ma roll to the side and let him slide in that way but that's it*. Besides, the last few times they'd had sex when she came, it fucked with her head too much the way her body reacted. Her stomach had tightened up into a hard ball like her baby was in there having a seizure or something. She'd made Kerron take her to the emergency room the first time it happened. *I can't have my baby feeling all that*, she'd often say to herself. Cassie felt like an unfit mother already, exposing her damn baby to sex like that. *Tonight is going to be if for the rest of the month*, Cassie thought sourly.

Cassie placed her key in the lock of the door and carried the bags into the small kitchen of the apartment that was just a step above what she'd been living in with Porsha. The only saving grace was at least it was her own place, with her name on the lease, and Kerron

was there with her. Nothing had shown her more than the experience of living with Porsha, that the old saying was true, two women could not live in one home. So, she was glad that she had a man who was willing to put a roof over her head. Everything wasn't all roses though. Cassie was quickly finding out Kerron was more than a handful.

"Hey, baby. How was your day?" Kerron asked actually pausing his video game in order to speak.

Most days he didn't even do that. Cassie had been getting on him about keeping his nose clean and going legit since he'd been arrested two months ago. Bailing him out of jail had totally wiped out her maternity leave fund and she was livid about it. So far, she had saved up a little over $2,000, but when Kerron got arrested and needed to be bailed out, Cassie really had no other choice but to go into her savings and use the money to get him out. If she didn't, he couldn't continue to hustle.

Kerron had been arrested some time ago for drug possession with the intent to distribute. But because Chicago had recently decriminalized marijuana and Chicago-Cook County jail was temporarily experiencing overpopulation; non-violent drug offenders were offered leniency. Kerron was currently out on bond awaiting his court date. After selling a few things, Kerron and Cassie had a lawyer on retainer, and they anticipated Kerron getting slapped with probation. No serious jail time. But costs of bonding Kerron out plus getting a lawyer was another added expense for the household. But again, Cassie had to do it because Kerron had a way of getting money here and there to help out around the house.

Only God knows what would've happened if suddenly Kerron couldn't be around to support Cassie and the baby. She'd be evicted out of her apartment. And then she definitely couldn't go back to Porscha's place. They were on cool terms now, but that option was a no-no. She might have to beg and plead with her parents to let her back in, and if they did, they were going to rule over her life indefinitely. They would definitely tell her she needed to break off the relationship with Kerron. They would place her on a curfew. Make her leave Chicago State and enroll in a community college close to their big ass house in Orland Park. There was even the possibility Cassie's father may make her put her baby up for adoption.

Nevertheless, that wasn't going to be a good option at all. Besides, by this point, she grew accustomed to having a strong sense of independence and didn't want anybody, especially her parents trying to tell her about her life and her decisions. Therefore, Ms. Cassie definitely couldn't let her man sit in jail another night. One day was too long. Shit, not only that but the day Kerron got arrested, the nigga

was blowing her phone up left and right Kerron so bad she'd had to feign being sick so she could use some sick time and then go "take care of business". She was hesitant, but with so much going on, she had to do what she had to do. Another painful lesson in trying to be an adult when you are still a child…

Although Cassie was bringing in a little under $1700 a month at her job, she had to endure a sheer amount of abuse on a daily basis from ignorant ass customers on the phone mainly calling about their food stamps, WIC and other social services. There was no other way to describe it other than outright verbal and emotional abuse and Cassie had to sit at a desk for hours, taking in people talking mad shit to her left and right. But she had to do what she had to do for her livelihood and her baby. Lately, Cassie had been trying to work as much overtime to pump cash back into her maternity leave fund given most of it was all gone thanks to Kerron. Cassie only had six hundred dollars on reserve now and the baby was due any day now. Between getting last minute things for the baby she was broke. Cassie was grateful for Porscha hooking her up with the job, but she only made $425 a week. It seemed like a lot but it went through Cassie's hands like water.

Cassie was getting some limited assistance from the government to help out here and there. She was getting about $100 a month in food stamps, which was nothing. She spent that up in a week. She could've gotten more, but her social worker told her that since she had Kerron living with her, she couldn't qualify for more. Chicago Housing Authority's Section 8 Waitlist was longer than the list of people waiting to get into Heaven. Her social worker down at United Families, Inc., (a local social services agency affiliated with Chicago State University) told her that she could get a voucher to help cover their $800 a month rent, but it usually took a good five to seven years before getting a call. With all that being said, once see now why Cassie was so pressed to get Kerron out of jail. She truly needed him to help out, otherwise, she was fucked like stripper pussy.

Another thing – when Cassie had her baby shower, she just assumed she was going to make out like a fat rat. But that didn't happen…AT ALL! Most of the people who were invited, people who she considered good friends were cheap as hell. Even her own damn relatives. Hell, even Kerron's people were on straight bullshit. Most came through with onesies and bottles. What about the things she clearly had on her registry? Porscha told Cassie the items she was putting on there were too expensive, but it was always Cassie's understand that closed mouths didn't get fed. If she didn't at least make the attempt to ask, nobody would know what exactly she wanted, rather needed, for her baby.

Despite Porscha not having any kids of her own, she kept telling her bestie not to put anything on her registry she couldn't afford to buy herself. Where they do that at? Cassie thought. Long story short, the only expensive item purchased off the registry was the five hundred-dollar stroller her mom purchased from Target, and Mrs. Pierce had to pull teeth to buy it. That was it. Cassie had been crushed.

Not only were her friends cheap as hell but so were parents. Other than the stroller, she would've thought her parents would have by now seen beyond the past and did right by going over the moon. She just knew they were going to go all the way out to shop for her first grandchild but evidently not. Although her mother wasn't really the one who was being cheap, her dad in so many ways told her she needed to swallow a hard pill of reality to understand just how difficult her life was going to be by making the wrong decisions early on. The old nigga was so unrelenting and crude with his parental advice, but for him, it was just tough love. Cassie cried for a few days after the shower but sucked it up. It was her baby and she'd make sure her child had everything it needed.

"Kerron don't just sit their bae. Help me with these bags," Cassie pouted. Cassie rolled her eyes, just pondering on how this nigga, her child's father, and hopefully her future husband, could be downright inconsiderate but wouldn't hesitate to ask for some pussy.

"Oh, I'm sorry girl…," Kerron said jumping up from the dilapidated couch she'd found at Goodwill. "…I thought you had it."

"Well, I don't. What have you been doing today?" Cassie asked shrugging off the long, wool coat she wore to work to keep the freezing chill off her pregnant body. It was the middle of December and as usual, Chicago was turning into Siberia. Winters in the Chi were no fucking joke. Everyone knows that. Cassie often thought about asking Kerron if he wanted to relocate somewhere warmer to raise their baby after they got married. Dallas. Houston. Maybe even Orlando or Miami. The biting and vicious cold combined with the stress of pregnancy was doing a number to Cassie.

Oh, speaking of the coat she had snuggled around her pregnant frame; she'd found it at a Goodwill Store on 93rd and Western Ave, not too far away from where she lived. Honestly, she couldn't believe it – Cassandra aka Cassie Pierce – who was once known to wear designer threads, was now in a matter of months a seasoned thrift shopper. Yeah, she could have splurged on a few nice pregnancy pieces for herself, instead, she chose to buy her son the best. Yes, they'd found out months ago she was expecting a baby boy.

"Go ahead and get off your feet, baby. I know you gotta be tired and shit. But then again you sit all day, so you should be good."

Cassie couldn't help but laugh bitterly.

"If you call sitting on the phone getting cussed out all day good, I guess so. The baby really hasn't been moving today." Cassie said flopping down on the rickety couch. "This little boy was laying right on my bladder all day. I had to log into a bathroom technical so many times today my team leader with her big ass nose came by my desk to ask if I was okay. Bitch I'm good! My stats, handle time and everything is still A-One," Cassie said venting for a few minutes while Kerron put away the few groceries she'd purchased. When he was done, Kerron came over to the couch and sat down next to her leaning down to kiss her belly.

"So, baby I wanted to talk to you about something," Kerron said taking her hand and rubbing it lightly. Cassie's ears immediately perked up. *I hope he found a job.*

"What's that, baby?"

"Well, you know with all this court shit going on, it's going to be hard for a nigga to get on. Then if I do, once my background checks come back, they gonna let my ass go anyway. So, I think I'm going to go into business for myself. As Black people, this is what we need to be doing. Starting our own businesses and rebuilding the community. I'm thinking hard about getting into real estate. Buying some of these old houses and flipping them for a profit."

Cassie sat there speechless for a few minutes unsure of how to approach the conversation. She definitely knew starting a business was all good. She couldn't debate his position. But starting a business also took money. Money that for right now they definitely didn't have. They were literally two weeks from becoming parents and as it stood, Kerron had been contributing very little to the household since his arrest two months ago. Not to mention, Cassie was about to be out of work the next six weeks minimum which she was already pissed about. She'd wanted to stay home with her baby at least six months and had been on track to do just that when Kerron was bringing in a good amount of coinage before getting arrested. Nothing was working out as planned and now this nigga wanted to be an entrepreneur? Nigga how? Nah, fuck that! Bleh. Nevermind, Cassie thought. She wasn't going to start an argument with this wannabe Damon Dash nigga. So, instead of voicing her concerns…at the moment, Cassie decided to play the supportive girlfriend.

"Well Kerron, we'll need to sit down a draw up a business plan. Brainstorm on a few ideas."

"I knew I could count on you to be in my corner baby," Kerron said walking out of the kitchen towards her.

"I can't wait until my little man gets here," Kerron continued, trailing his lips up her stomach to her now D cup breasts. In seconds

he had Cassie's shirt and bra off wrapping his thick lips around her nipples. Cassie hadn't thought she'd be in the mood, but it did feel good as hell, she thought pressing her hand to the back of his head.

"You said he's sleep, let's wake his little ass up! Hell, when he gets here he's going to wear us out. We have to get it in as much as we can right now," Kerron seductively laughed as he quickly stood to his feet and unbuckled his pants, dropping them to the floor. His hard nine-inch dick bobbed right in Cassie's face. With no hesitation, she took him in her mouth. She grabbed the base of his dick and slid his rod in and out of her mouth until she felt like gagging and looked up at Kerron. He told Cassie he loved looking down at her sucking on his piece and got off on it when she gagged. She went to work really putting on a show for him. *Hurry up and come nigga so I can get me a nap!*

Kerron pulled his tool out of Cassie's mouth.

"Pull them pants down so I can get some of that pregnant pussy, girl. That lil pink puffy monkey stay wet for a nigga, don't it?" Kerron asked rubbing the wet head of his dick across Cassie's lips while she shimmied out of her panties and leggings. Kerron turned her around.

"Kneel over the couch," Kerron commanded and Cassie quickly obliged tooting her ass up as she bent over the back of the couch while Kerron coated his rod with her ever flowing juices. Honestly, Cassie got a laugh out of it because Kerron insisted it had something to do with him. Negro, please! At this stage of the game, Cassie was walking around with a panty-liner on 24/7 and it had nothing to do with her being sexually aroused.

"Gahdamn this pussy wet!" Kerron hissed coating the head of his dick with her juices (okay by now Cassie really was wet!) and spreading her pussy lips with his meat. Rubbing and teasing her clit until she was begging him to stick it in. Cassie began pumping her pregnant ass back until Kerron eased his dick slowly inside of her pumping with slow, steady strokes that had her crying out in pleasure.

"You knew I wanted this didn't you?" Kerron said pulling his dick out and slapping her ass with it. "You need to stop being so stingy. That's my pussy anyways ain't it."

"Oooh, yes daddy give it to me please!"

Kerron shoved his dick back in and Cassie's eyes rolled to the back of her head and she got wetter than she'd ever felt before.

"Damn, you like that that shit, don't you?

"Yes! Harder baby!' Cassie moaned reaching around her huge belly and going between her legs to spread her pussy wider. Wait a second, Cassie thought her pussy was usually slicker than okra, this felt like piss. Oh my god! Does this baby have me pissing myself and I don't even know it? Then the quiet realization that her water may have

broken hit her. She quickly pushed Kerron off of her.

“What’s wrong girl? I was just about to bust.”

“Kerron, I think my water just broke,” Cassie said hopping up from the couch and looking down. Sure enough there was a huge wet spot on the already ramshackle couch.

“Your water? What? We ain’t even drinking shit.”

“Oh my god! Shut up, Kerron! We both need to get in the shower and get to the hospital. The baby is coming.” Cassie said scrambling to the floor and heading into the bathroom.

Chapter Four

Three Months Later

Cassie sat at her desk watching the clock like a hawk. It was almost time for her fifteen-minute break at work and she needed it bad. It had been hard adjusting to being back to work so soon after giving birth to KJ. Her son was the light of her life and she definitely needed him there since everything else was so hectic. Kerron had been right by her side the day she gave birth to KJ. She couldn't have asked for a more supportive man by her side, but the second she left the hospital it seemed like everything changed. Yes, they were in a relationship, but Cassie was learning that she was very much a single mother.

Kerron did the bare minimum regarding the bills only managing to scrounge up enough money to pay the rent. Once he did that, Kerron felt like his job was done. It was up to her to keep on the lights, cable (which he acted like he couldn't live without) and put food on the table. It was hard as hell and Cassie soon found herself Downtown, trying her best to beg for more public assistance than the little she was getting. Soon, she found herself just as agitated, abusive and angered much like the clients she dealt with on a daily basis. Her disposition had really taken a turn. No longer did she feel like people could be doing more to take care of themselves. She now knew you could be working your ass off and it still could barely be scraping by.

Cassie was just logging off for her break when her team leader came by.

"Here you go Cassie, you've been getting some phone calls for the last thirty minutes. Please be aware that you're not to get calls at work unless they're an emergency," Emily, the bulbous-nosed white woman-team lead said, her thin lips pressed tight. She handed Cassie a few yellow sticky notes that had phone numbers and short messages scribbled on to them.

“Excuse me, Emily? I don’t get calls at work. People call me on my cell phone. The only place that has the direct number here is my son’s daycare in case of emergency,” Cassie replied snatching the messages out of her hand and scanning them quickly before rushing to the break room to return the call. Cassie, angered by what she read, was ready to go smooth off on that fat white rude bitch. Emily’s ass should have been taken her off the phone lines the second those calls from KJ’s daycare came through. Now here it was an hour later.

Cassie whipped out her cell phone and held it to her ear shaking with anger.

“ABC Day Care, Shonda speaking…”

“Shonda, it’s Cassandra Pierce. Mother of Kerron Willis, Jr.”

“Cassie, it’s about time you called me back. Little Kerron is sick. I’ma need you to come pick him up. You shouldn’t have even brought him over here today sick like this, girl!”

Cassie groaned inside feeling like shit. She’d noticed KJ had a little cough this morning, but she really couldn’t afford to take the day off. She wasn’t in the mood to go back and forth with Shonda but known as Ms. Delores. She did a really good job taking care of KJ and the very last thing she wanted to do was piss her off.

“Ms. Delores, can you call Kerron to come pick him up? The day is almost over but I really can’t leave. His daddy should be able to come get him though,” Cassie pleaded through the phone. Her little fifteen-minute break was already dwindling down. Cassie then headed to the bathroom so she could at least relieve herself quickly.

“Baby girl, I already called that boy! He said he was in a business meeting and couldn’t come and get him. Now look, I’ma handle this for you the rest of the day but tomorrow? Baby no! I send sick kids home. I don’t play that. Have some consideration for me and the other parents, please. BYE!” Ms. Delores said before abruptly hanging up on Cassie.

Cassie didn’t even care. She was just grateful she was going to watch him. What the fuck kind of business meeting is Kerron in that he can’t go get his son?

Cassie left the stall and went to wash her hands quickly. Afterward, she grabbed a soda from the vending machine and then sat back at her desk. This whole situation was just getting hectic. Kerron was really going to need to step up. The thought that she was probably going to need to stay home with KJ tomorrow was already stressing her out. Now she needed to see about getting him into the pediatrician too. This was just too much for right now, and the thought of having to suddenly make these last minute plans with no real help from Kerron was making her head pound. She put her headset on and got back to work.

“Thank you for calling the Illinois Health and Human Services Division, my name is Cassie, how may I help you?” Cassie asked the caller in a lifeless, zombie-like tone. Cassie lowered her gaze and shook her head thinking, *Fuck I hate my life right now. It has got to get better than this.*

The day was finally over and Cassie pulled her car into the parking lot at Walmart. She’d avoided going to the store for as long as she could. Who the fuck likes to go into a store when they knew damn well they didn’t really have any money?

Cassie wheeled the rickety cart around the store trying to decide on what she could purchase. She only had fifty dollars left on her food stamp card and she knew or at least assumed she had a good twenty dollars cash in her wallet.

She had to get diapers, wipes, purified water, and some other items for the house. Cassie strolled around the baby section wistfully looking at all the items she wished she could throw in her cart for KJ but couldn’t afford. Never in her life would she have thought she’d feel like crying because she couldn’t afford something in Wal-Mart of all places. But here she was. Looking pitiful as hell. *I can’t even throw this Garaniamls set in my basket until payday this Friday,* Cassie thought ruefully. Something's got to give. Kerron, Jr. was growing so big even at three months, all of his onesies were tight as hell. She’d thought she was doing good buying some things up a few sizes but unfortunately those things were too big. Cassie felt like she couldn’t win for lose right now.

Let me not dwell on the shit, Cassie kept thinking to herself as she kept pushing her cart through the store and grabbing her carefully budgeted items. By this point, she had decided to just grab some items to make a large pot of spaghetti. It would feed them for a few days and she could also take some for lunch. Cassie already knew Kerron was going to complain but she was past the point of caring what he thought. Until he could contribute fully and make things better instead of worse, his opinion meant nothing to her. Honestly, Cassie’s feelings toward Kerron were growing harsher by the day. The reality that his court date was coming soon was also on her mind.

Sadly, that wasn’t even affecting her too much. After all, she was basically a single mother already shouldering all the responsibility. If Kerron got sentenced to jail (which again, based on their lawyer was unlikely), what difference was that really going to make in her and KJ’s life? Absolutely none. Yeah, he covered most of the rent, but fuck it, if she had to, at the end of the day she could swing it. Cassie was

tired of the dead weight and rolling over in bed with a useless nigga snoring in her damn ear.

Since giving birth, they hadn't even been having sex lately and that was perfectly fine with her. Cassie was standing in line when a lively group of women got in line behind her. Cassie gave them a quick smile and turned her back to patiently wait her turn.

"Bitch! When I tell you my check was too fat last pay period," one of the women crowed loudly behind her.

"Hoe, how much was it? I took a break on all the overtime I was getting but best believe a bitch about to get right back to it! Shit last month I paid my $1500 rent with overtime alone!"

"Girl my check was $3500! Off one client. You know as soon as I got paid I hit the Prada store and copped those boots I'd been looking at!"

"I know you did, hoe! So, where we eatin' at when we leave here?"

"Let's hit Pappadeux's out in Westmont. The food is just okay but those drinks are off the muthafuckin' chain," another voice chimed in before they all fell out laughing.

Damn. It must be nice, Cassie thought. She couldn't even remember the last time she'd laughed so freely. Hell, she couldn't even think of a time in over a year she'd had a dime to spend casually. From the second she'd left her parent's home it had been a constant struggle. Porscha still called to keep up with her but it wasn't like it used to be. Yeah, they saw each other at work every day but Cassie couldn't hang out after work or go for drinks. She had to hurry home by a certain time to get KJ for fear of being charged for every minute she was late. Matter of fact, if this cashier didn't hurry up, she was going to have to dump her cart and come back later. She was only risking it now because it was such a hassle to do things with KJ. Not to mention, she relished every minute of alone time she could get. Cassie loved her son's entire existence, but sometimes she just needed a breather and she'd only been a mother for three months.

The cashier began ringing her items up and she took a quick look at the time on her cell-phone, okay she could make it in time. Cassie looked around embarrassed to have to pull out her food stamp card in front of the three women behind her.

Yeah, they were all dressed in nursing uniforms, but you could tell they had some money. All three women had elaborate sets of nails on their hands. Anybody, even from a distance, could tell they stayed up in a salon to get their hair done. They all wore weaves, but these were no cheap kitchen stylists' weaves with yaki hair. Oh no, bish! This looked like the finest Malaysian weaves adorning these bitches' heads. Shit, let's not even mention the jewelry around their necks and on their fingers. Cassie looked down and saw the latest sneakers on their

feet. Damn. Then and there Cassie pondered the uselessness of her creative writing degree. *I should have gone into nursing instead of trying to get this creative writing degree,* she kept thinking as she ear-hustled the women still chirping behind her.

Cassie dug around in her wallet to retrieve her food stamp card. Once she found it she quickly gave it a swipe and put it back in her wallet.

The cashier, some portly girl with no edges and tight microbraids infused with cheap purple weave gawked at Cassie and loudly stated, "I'm sorry ma'am, it didn't read the card. Can you do it again please?" The cashier then rapidly tapped her hands on the check-out computer waiting for Cassie to run the card one more time. Agitated and embarrassed, Cassie wanted to drop through the floor. "Sorry about that," Cassie lightly apologized as she swiped the card one more time.

The register made another annoying screeching sound. That all-too-familiar sound of rejection, letting a broke bitch now you ain't got no coins on ya shit.

"Ma'am, I am so sorry. It's still not reading, the system for EBT cards has been messing up all day. I've had to key in the numbers. Can I have your card? I'll enter the numbers manually. It should work then."

Cassie's cheeks were flaming red from the inside. Had she been a White woman surely her face would have been tomato red. The cashier then told her the remaining balance of her total.

"Oh, chile I remember those days. It used to be struggle hill all day, every day for me and my son Vontavis," Cassie heard behind her.

Cassie went to grab the twenty dollar bill she knew she had in her wallet earlier only to find it wasn't there. What in the entire hell? Cassie frantically searched every nook and cranny of her purse for the missing money on the verge of tears. She knew for a fact it was in her purse last night. No one at work could have taken it because she locked her purse in her own personal trunk under her desk that only she had the lock too. The only person who would've taken the cash was Kerron's ass. She couldn't believe it.

"Okay, I had some money in my purse but..um can you just take those items off please?" Cassie asked her throat tight with tears.

Cassie couldn't believe this shit. KJ was literally down to the supply of diapers she put daily in his bag to take to daycare and now she couldn't replace those. No, Kerron had to go. If he couldn't be a help to her and their son what use was he? It wasn't like he spent any quality time with him anyway.

"How you doing, sis? My name is Tramella. Look, cancel this whole transaction and put that money she spent on food back on her card. I'm paying it forward today. I'ma get all this for you. Don't argue

with me either. It's done. We all need a blessing sometimes and it looks like you've had a stressful day."

Cassie turned to refuse the offer. "Oh, I'm good, ma'am. I'm just flustered," she lied.

This was just all too embarrassing for her. Seems like daddy, Mr. Pierce, the staunchly conservative Republican, was right after all. Kerron was a worthless piece of shit nigga. KJ, as much as she adorned her child, was turning out to be a growing ball of stress. Her creative writing degree wasn't going to amount to anything in the near future. She had a dead-end job with a cracka ass white bitch for a manager.

But she still had to keep her head up to the sky and make this shit work…

"Nah, chica! Look, don't be too proud. We all go through some things. Please, I got you, sis. We gotta support each other."

Cassie paused for a moment and stared in the unknown woman's eyes and saw nothing but sincerity, all she could do was burst into tears and hug the woman.

"Thhhaaank you," Cassie blubbered with tears. She couldn't believe she was actually the recipient of a stranger's kindness. Cassie truly thought these random acts of kindness were something only white folks were privy to. Shit, you see on Facebook or YouTube. Ironically, it was happening to her.

"Girl, don't you worry about this at all. It ain't nothing. Plus, we Black women need to stick together. If a sister can't help another sister in need you might as well kill yourself. Especially if you're in a position to do it."

Within minutes the cashier had the transaction canceled and rang up again. It was only sixty dollars total but when you didn't have it, that small amount could seem like a thousand dollars.

Once Cassie got her items rung up and paid for, she quickly tried to make her way out the store. But before she could bust a move and go pick up KJ, the god Samaritan quickly stopped her. "Sis, hold on a second while I check out. I wanna talk to you."

The woman waited as the cashier rang up her snacks. Cassie only had seconds to spare but how could she say no after the woman had extended her such kindness? She would just have to make something up to tell Ms. Delores.

One woman, who by now Cassie assumed was a nurse, was done checking out, she walked over to where Cassie stood with her basket.

"I wanted to take a minute to formally introduce myself. I'm Tramella Wilkins. Nice to meet you," Tramella said as she extended her hand to shake Cassie's.

Cassie followed suit, extended her hand and then said, "I'm

Cassandra Pierce, but I go by Cassie."

"Nice to meet you, Cassie. Anyways, the reason why I stopped you is simple and I don't want you to take this wrong way. I don't want to be presumptuous or anything, but I can see you're a young sista out here with a baby. Now I work for an agency where we train women, and sometimes a few men to be certified nursing assistants and send them out to provide private duty care. Everyone working for my company does very well for themselves. Lots of hours, overtime, benefits you name it. Now, I want you to take my card. If you find yourself not happy with where you're at in life and struggling too hard, just give me a call okay? We even have a daycare center that charges a nominal fee to the employees. The company pretty much covers all the costs and it's 24 hours a day."

Cassie couldn't believe what she was hearing. It was music to her ears.

"Thank you so much. I can't thank you enough for what you did for me back there. I honestly had that money in my purse this morning, I think my boyfriend went in my purse and…," Cassie quickly shut her mouth ashamed at having put her business out there like that but hell, it didn't get any more shameful than what the strange woman had already witnessed.

Tramella reached in her purse and pulled out her wallet. She whipped out three hundred dollars and pressed it into Cassie's trembling hands.

"Oh God no! You've done more than enough for me. I couldn't possibly take this from you." Cassie said shocked by the gesture. Tears sprang to her eyes again.

"Uh uh, baby! This is for my sake. I've been where you're at, trust me! My own family wouldn't help me and my son when I was at my lowest and they were able to. I always said once I got on my feet, I was going to pay it forward. Let me be a blessing to you and your child today. You don't owe me shit! If I see you on the street tomorrow you can walk past me like you don't even know me. This ain't about you. It's about me being able to bless someone," Tramella said passionately.

"Girl you might as well gon' head and take that blessing. She does stuff like this for people all the time. I'm Sharquita by the way," the other woman by Tramella's side chimed.

"Thank you all so much for the kind words. God is good. You'll never understand how much I needed this blessing today. I'm going to accept it and pay it forward myself. Anyways, I wish I could talk longer but I really have to go pick up my son," Cassie said before impulsively giving each of the women a quick hug.

Afterward, she darted out of the store feeling like she was walking

on air. She couldn't believe her luck. As soon as she secured her seat belt, Cassie looked in her purse to make sure she hadn't dropped the card Tramella had given her. As she was waiting to exit the parking lot, a black Mercedes honked loudly as it passed. Cassie peered out the window to see who it was. It was Tramella and her friends waving to her. Cassie felt more optimistic than she had in months. She had already made up her mind to not even tell Kerron about the incident. Especially the money she'd lucked upon. As soon as she picked up KJ, she was going to come back to the store to get her baby some cough medicine and maybe she'd spend a hundred dollars getting him a few inexpensive gently used items from the Once Upon A Child thrift store. She felt truly blessed today.

Chapter Five

Two weeks had passed, and it seemed like the day Cassie had been unexpectedly blessed in the store had been nothing more than a figment of her overactive imagination. She drove to the daycare to pick KJ up damn near inconsolable. Ms. Delores had called her at work again stating KJ was sick. Emily, her team leader, had already informed her the next time she didn't show for work would result in a termination.

This past week Cassie had relied on Kerron to drop KJ off at daycare so she could get to work on time. The week before she'd been late three times. After so many tardies accrued, it equaled an absence.

To make matters even worse, when Cassie would pick KJ up, Ms. Delores complained and nitpicked about how Kerron would sometimes be late or sometimes not have KJ dressed in proper attire. One day, Kerron forgot to put a hat on his head and his jacket wasn't fully zipped up properly. It was almost as if the nigga was just rushing to get KJ out the door and out of his presence. What was so pressing that Kerron was treating his first born this way? Why was Kerron making shit so hard when all he had to do was the bare minimum? These were burning questions floating through Cassie's mind. At one point, she almost found herself having a breakdown last week and just wanted to kick Kerron out, but she managed to quell her anger. Perhaps things would turn around if she had a meaningful conversation with him? she wondered.

Then again, not to mention, she quickly remembered Kerron hadn't even paid rent this month. Cassie was walking around on pins and needles waiting for Mr. Perkins, their landlord, to say something to her about the missing rent. This was just absolute pure fucking bullshit. All the fuck nigga needed to do was come up with the rent, Cassie handled everything else. But now, with rent not getting paid, it was going to all fall on her. Kerron's credit was fucked up, so every bill and the apartment were in her name. Cassie was holding on to every shred of dignity, but it was getting harder every day. Last week she'd even contemplated calling her father to ask for help but couldn't

bring herself to do it. She still had her pride and all the things he'd said about her and KJ being a mistake were as fresh as if he'd said them yesterday.

She'd already gotten several handouts from her mother promising to pay them back once she got on her feet. Cassie couldn't fathom having her hand out again when she already had two outstanding loans with her mother.

The last time she'd asked her Mother for a loan, her mother didn't hesitate to bring up Kerron's name and rightly so. Cassie's mother said she didn't mind helping her and the baby, but when she knew damn well her money was going to put a roof and food in the stomach of a young able-bodied man, she had a fucking problem with that shit. Cassie had been shocked into silence. She rarely heard her mother curse but when she did, she meant every word. Needless to say, her mother was at the end of her rope with her….until she got rid of Kerron.

Cassie pulled into Ms. Delores, driveway and hopped out of the car. A few minutes later Ms. Delores answered the door with her nose turned up at her.

"It's about time you got here. These poor babies these days. Mama's just push em' out and leave them. Their damn pussies don't even be healed up good before they claim they have to be back at work. Six weeks my ass," Ms. Delores mumbled underneath her breath but loud and clear enough that Cassie heard every word.

She'd had about enough of tolerating her disrespect.

"Ms. Delores, I don't know a mother alive who wants to leave their baby so soon. We do it because we have to!"

"Well you got a nigga over there with you, don't you? You ol' okie-doke ass heffas these days, I swear. If a nigga can't sit you down for at least six months after you push out his baby, you need to get the fuck away from his ass. He's showing you right there what kind of man and father he is! Shit, I'm being generous saying six months. When my Lawrence was alive, the minute I pushed his first child out, he sat my black ass down. I'll bet you don't even know what that is, do you?"

"No Ma'am, I don't," Cassie huffed as she gathered KJ's belongings, so they could get the hell out of there.

"When a man 'sits you down', that mean he's taking on all the responsibility and his woman only has to worry about creating a home and raising his children."

"Okay well, every woman doesn't want to be a housewife, Ms. Delores."

"No, baby you got the game fucked up. Every woman and I do mean every, wants the option to be a stay at home mother if she so chooses. But you young women out here are laying up and having

babies with these young thugs who don't even give you the option. Now since you got so much to say about upholding sorry ass men and you love going to work so much, where is the daycare money for this month? It's already the sixth and you're supposed to be adding on the $75 from last month that I told you I would add on to this month's bill." Ms. Delores asked placing each of her hands on her wide hips. Cassie was cringing inside.

"Okay about that Ms. Delores….," Cassie started.

"Oh, here we go with the bullshit! Look, baby. I can see you ain't got much sense, but I don't watch kids for free. I really don't. I don't even let my own grandkids come over for more than two hours at a time because I don't want my son's getting any ideas. Now KJ is cute as a button, even though his nose stay running all the time, but I need my money baby. All of it."

"I understand that Ms. Delores and I'ma talk to Kerron so we can have your money in the morning. It's late after the seventh, right?

"That's right. But you cuttin' it down to the wire baby and I don't play about my money. I feel for you young girls but I'm not running a charity."

"Yes ma'am," Cassie said grabbing KJ's diaper bag and practically running out of the door.

Cassie strapped KJ into his car-seat and climbed into the front seat damn near hyperventilating. This was just too much stress. Kerron was going to need to step up even though at this point she was well aware of his short-comings. Although Cassie still loved him more than anything Kerron was going to have to get it together for the sake of their family.

Cassie made her way up to the second floor of their apartment ready to pass out. "Little boy is it time for you to walk yet?" she asked staring down at her son's adorable face. He was the spitting image of his father with the exception of her dimples. "Not even close huh? Okay then," she said adjusting the diaper bag and her purse on one shoulder while balancing KJ in her other hand.

Cassie reached her front door and stopped. Smack dab in the middle of the door was a bold, red sign that said eviction. Cassie tried to quickly snatch it off the door when she saw her next-door neighbor walk past.

"Girl, chile, that sign been up there all damn day. When I saw it, I knocked on your door so Kerron could take it off, but he never answered. I know he's home, the music been bumping all damn day," her neighbor Cheryl said.

Cassie was humiliated.

Everything seemed to be crashing around her at once. She stuck her key in the lock and sure enough, the music was blaring and the TV

was on in the living room. However, Kerron wasn't in the front room. This nigga stay running up bills he never has money to help pay.

What the hell is that I hear? Cassie thought walking towards the bedroom. *OH FUCK NO!* Her eyes widened as she got closer to the unmistakable sounds of fucking going on under her own roof. I know this isn't Kerron, I already told his ass about letting his friend Mike bring his hoes over here, she thought walking towards the bedroom door to swiftly kick him out. Some people didn't have any home training. Who actually goes to another person's home to lay up? A grown man at that? Kerron's sorry-ass friend that's who. If you couldn't put a roof over your own head you didn't even deserve any pussy as far as she was concerned.

Cassie threw open the door ready to go smooth off on Mike's black ass when she received the shock of her life. Off the top, she knew it wasn't Mike because he had a rich chocolate complexion. And Mike was a bit heavyset. This nigga nestled between the legs of an obviously overweight white bitch was her own man Kerron. Cassie couldn't believe it she was too shocked to move but that quickly wore off. Kerron was balls deep in this fat white bitch's pussy!

"WHAT THE FUCK IS GOING ON IN HERE? SO, THIS IS WHAT WE'RE DOING KERRON? LAID UP WITH THIS FAT PORKY WHITE BITCH WHILE I'M SLAVING AWAY AT WORK?!? UNDER THE SAME ROOF WHERE WE LAY OUR HEAD? WHERE WE RAISE OUR SON?!?! FUCK NIGGA, YOU GOT ME FUCKED UP!"

"Gahdamn baby! Look it's not what you think!" Kerron had the nerve to say at his still hard dick bobbed against his stomach coated with the fat white hoe's juices.

"Kerron, baby what's going on here? Who is this woman?" the fat pale white grumbled as she scrunched the sheets over her portly, plump body.

For a split-second, Cassie considered jumping on the big bitch standing in her bedroom naked but no – this was all Kerron. Cassie knew right then in there she wasn't risking a day of her freedom, fighting over a sorry no good ass nigga. Kerron simply wasn't worth it.

"Bitch, get the fuck out of my house before I change my mind about fuckin' you up," Cassie snarled at the woman who hopped her misshapen ass up from her bed and scrambled to pick up her clothes.

"Kerron, baby call me!" she said running out the door.

"Look, bae, I swear to God this ain't what you think. Look, I'ma be honest with you. I was only fuckin' her because I needed money to pay this month's rent. I know the daycare is behind and I'm just trying to do my part!"

Cassie scoffed. Unfuckingbelieveable.

"So, doing your part is cheating on me to pay the bills instead of

getting a job like a decent human being?" She shook her head bitterly. "If only we all thought that way Kerron I could have sold pussy to all the niggas who hit on me on a daily basis. But no, here I've been over here looking like a goddamn fool, sticking by your ass when EVERYONE including your crazy ass mama told me to get rid of your ass."

Kerron's shoulders stiffened.

"Stop lying on my mama, Cassie. You know good goddamn well she didn't tell you no shit like that."

Cassie just placed her hands on her slim hips and cocked her head at him.

"Ask her. You know your Mama doesn't pull any punches. Look this is over. It's been a long time coming but you need to get the fuck out! I don't want you anymore, I don't need you. Just do the best you can to help take care of your son Kerron. That's all I ask. Is help with KJ. I don't give a damn if you have to fuck a fleet of white women to do it either. Fuck White women, sell plasma I don't give a damn. But what you need to do right now is get the hell out of my sight before I completely lose it!" Cassie growled, huffing, rapidly tapping her foot against the floor. Nope, she would not relinquish what dignity she had left to Kerron. Absolutely not. Cassie had bigger fish to fry.

Kerron smacked his teeth and threw his hands up in the air. "Man! fuck this shit! You ain't never supported a nigga's dreams any damn way. I been telling you I need capital to get this business off the ground, you wouldn't sign the papers for me to get the shit I need, so fuck you. We're struggling because you're small-minded," Kerron spat angrily as he rummaged the room and began tossing his belongings into a trash bag. He walked all over the house gather the little bit of shit that was his. It didn't amount too much. An hour later he was gone.

Just like that, Cassie and Kerron's relationship was down the drain and all Cassie had to show for it was a baby on her hip. After simmering down, she heated KJ up a bottle and took him out of his carrier, sat and fed him and silently cried. Honestly, Cassie couldn't even cry the way she wanted to because she didn't want to scare her son. She glanced at KJ and said, "Well, at least he did leave me with one good thing. You." Cassie then lifted KJ up to plant a kiss on his sweet round cheeks. "I promise I will always take care of you and I'm going to make everything okay for you if it's the last thing I do," Cassie vowed to her son.

After KJ was fed and burped, she patted him down to sleep and set about cleaning up her apartment. It was a time for new beginnings. Cassie had already called her mom and told her what had gone on with Kerron. It actually hurt Cassie to see her own mother and father

gleeful about the problems she was having but she wasn't in any position to say anything about it. Cassie didn't say a peep back as she was lectured about the turn her life had taken and all the mistakes she'd made.

If there was ever a time she had to humble herself, it was now. By the time the conversation was over, her parents had transferred three thousand dollars into her account. She'd be able to pay all her past due bills, the daycare and pay her rent up for the next two months. Cassie's parents also let her know that would be the last handout she would be given for quite some time. Franklin Pierce also insisted they have a sit-down talk about what she was doing in regard to her education . Cassie was in no position to refuse. After all, look at where not listening had gotten her? Absolutely nowhere.

Cassie walked into her bedroom with a large trash bag and a can of Lysol. She really wanted to toss the whole damn mattress, but she couldn't afford to do that. Instead, she stripped the sheets off to throw away and struggled to flip the mattress to the opposite side. Doing her best, she said to herself, "Maybe I should have jumped on both of their asses. This damn mattress is one of the few things I actually bought new and this nigga gon' fuck a fat white hoe on top of it."

Now that Cassie's parents had afforded her some of their generosity, Cassie finally had time to sit down and think. She needed a game plan in place for her life. For her son's. She was all he had to depend on in this world. The rose-colored glasses she'd been wearing for over a year concerning Kerron were officially off and in the trash.

It was truly God's favor that had her go home early today, so she could find out what kind of snake Kerron really was. After cleaning up, she went to the bank and withdrew some of the money her parents had given her. She made sure to write the amount down in her private journal. Along with all the other loans they'd given her that she vowed to pay back as soon as she could. Cassie knew her parents felt she'd strayed from the way they'd brought her up, but she really hadn't. She'd gotten the basics down, but no one was perfect. If it killed her she was going to pay every dime back.

Cassie paid the past due rent and the following months making sure to get receipts. She then drove over to Ms. Delores's house and paid her as well. Ms. Delores seemed shocked when she handed her the cash. As if she wanted her not to be able to pay.

"Ms. Delores, I also want to give you notice that KJ won't be coming here again after this month," Cassie said once she was handed her receipt. The woman started to say something, but Cassie walked

out the door. She was going to use her this last month while she job hunted but she didn't want anyone like her watching her son anymore. It seemed like Ms. Delores was a woman who reveled in other people's downfalls. Cassie didn't need that type of negativity in her life.

Tomorrow she would be dropping KJ off right on time and she was going into work to pack up her personal belongings and to quit. It was clear to her she wouldn't have that job long, so rather than wait for the inevitable, she was just going to leave. When she closed her eyes to go to sleep that night she was optimistic and content for a split second she actually thought she would miss Kerron lying next to her, but she didn't.

The following morning, Cassie stuck to everything she'd written down the night before. She'd dropped KJ off. He seemed to be just fine to her. He wasn't sneezing or coughing. If Ms. Delores called with that bullshit again, she was going to cuss her old ass out.

Afterward, she went to her job and quit. She was shocked to see her team leader having the nerve to act shocked. Damn near ever since she'd come back from maternity leave, Emily was complaining and threatening to write her up or fire her. Cassie figured Emily must've been really mad she didn't get the chance to do it. Cassie stopped by Porscha's desk and quickly told her she was leaving and that she'd call her later on to catch up.

Cassie then went to the grocery store and stocked her kitchen up. It had been so long since she'd been able to do that she almost thought she was going overboard with the amount of food she'd purchased but no. She would finally have her first fully stocked kitchen to walk in since moving out of her parents' home. It was nice to only need to buy one steak for herself – not to have Kerron's million food requests when he barely contributed. Kerron seemed to be under the impression it was a free-for-all just because she got food stamps. After leaving she went through the drive-thru at Starbucks and grabbed a huge white chocolate mocha latte. Those were her favorite and she hadn't had a dime to splurge on anything as frivolous as a Starbucks drink. Once she got home, brought everything in the house and put it away she sat down and exhaled.

Cassie looked around the sparse apartment. It ain't much but it's all mine, she thought to herself. This is just the start; my son and I will have better. Cassie reached for her purse and pulled out her wallet. There were two last things she wanted to look into by the end of the day. Possibly taking some nursing classes and calling Tramella who'd

been her angel in disguise a few weeks ago. Things finally seemed to be falling into place. Maybe it all needed to fall apart for Cassie to see she needed to do something different. She was going to embrace it.

Morning Star Home Health - Tramella Wilkins the card read. She was damn sure about to call her.

Chapter Six

Four weeks later Cassie was holding her certified nursing assistant certificate in her hands. She couldn't believe it. She'd been so nervous every day going into her training classes, but she'd stuck to it. It was so unlike anything she'd ever thought about doing in her life she couldn't believe it was over and she'd done it.

Tramella had truly been a godsend. From the day she'd broken down and called the number on the card she was given, Tramella had taken her under her wing in every way. Cassie felt like she was the older sister she'd never had. Tramella had her come by the office the same day and she'd done nothing but fill out all the necessary paperwork needed for her to start the class that would be starting the following Monday. God had truly ordered her steps that day because if she hadn't called when she did, it would have been another six weeks before there was another class starting and that was if they had enough qualified people to teach.

"Hey, graduate!" Tramella said walking over to her. They were at the main offices of Morning Star Health Care and had just completed the graduation ceremony. Cassie along with ten new CNAs were celebrating with a cake, pizza, and drinks. It was cheesy but at least they did a little something.

Cassie pulled Tramella into a tight hug.

"Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity Tramella! I can't thank you enough."

"Don't you worry about it, baby. I told you before, I've been through the fire and didn't get a hand up! I had to do things to take care of myself and my son Vontavis I'd never wish on another woman. Gone hungry. Been homeless. Had to get food from a food pantry. No woman should have to deal with that. But enough of me going down memory lane, girl! It's Friday and your first day of work is Monday so we're celebrating for real at my house tonight! We're throwing you a little get-together. It's all set. You can even bring your baby. It's just going to be us. Me, Prenisha and Sharquita!"

Cassie was shocked someone would do something so nice for her.

She didn't know why though. Tramella Wilkins was truly her guardian angel.

"Are you sure? Tramella you've already done so much for me already. I can't keep relying on you. You even got KJ in the daycare."

"Oh, girl, that was nothing. They had to let La'Tanya go behind some bullshit she pulled with a client. The daycare is for employees only so that slot was as good as yours. There is no grace period either. The second you're terminated, so is your child. I don't know how that crazy heffa let this cush ass job go but that's her problem."

Cassie just nodded her head and put that information in the back of her mind. As it stood, there was no way in hot hell she was giving up this job. They paid for her training and all she had to do was work for the company for six months. Other places you had to get state certification training at other places before getting a job – a job Cassie already had lined up through Morning Star courtesy of Tramella. Morning Star also paid for her to take the state test which she passed at the top of her class. There was a stipend for six pairs of scrubs every six months and the real kicker was this, even during training she'd made more than she did at the call center. She'd pocket $850 a week during training with more to come now that she was done with training and had received her certificate.

"We'll be there!" Cassie said excitedly as she entered Tramella's address into her phone. "Okay, let me get KJ from the nursery, go home and get changed real quick and we'll be there at six. Do you want me to bring something?"

"Girl, now what did I tell you? This is your graduation party. We're celebrating your accomplishment today. Just bring yourself."

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No sooner had KJ and Cassie walked into the house, her cell phone began to ring. She'd been getting calls from the same number while she was driving but chose to ignore them because she didn't recognize the number. Cassie decided to pick up and tell whoever this was to stop calling her goddamn phone!

"Hello?"

"Thank God you picked up Cassie. Baby, it's me…ya man, Kerron!"

"Nigga, you got a whole lot of fuckin' nerve to be calling me. I've called you plenty the last four weeks to come visit your son, to bring some milk, diapers, and clothes over or how about help with some daycare costs and your ass been ghost. And nigga, you're no longer my mothafuckin' man! What the hell do you want anyway?" Cassie spat. She was livid he would even dare call her after an entire month of ignoring his child. It's a shame it was so easy for men to walk away

from their kids.

"Baby look, I don't have a lot of time. Just know I've been thinking about you and KJ 24/7. I need my family right now. Look I'm in some trouble…,"

"Aww hell nah nigga. I don't give a FUCK what you've gotten yourself into this time. I know one thing nigga, you better not make it so I don't get my damn money back for that bond."

The line grew quiet.

"Kerron! Did you hear what the hell I said?"

"Look, baby, I know you're angry but I'm in jail again. Truth be told it's all because of you. You threw me out so I been out here in these streets trying to make some money so I could get my family back. I knew I couldn't show my face to you and my son with nothing to contribute to the household. I know I was wrong for what I did before but you told me to stay off the street so I did."

"Nigga, that didn't mean fuck fat white bitches in my house instead. Kerron you got me all the way fucked up. Don't pull me in your bullshit anymore. You always expect me to be so down for you but when me and your son needed you, you couldn't be a man. I'm through with it." Cassie felt like she needed to get off the phone right away before Kerron tried to pull on her heartstrings and pull her right back in.

She couldn't lie, she'd missed him. She was sad KJ didn't at least have some semblance of a father figure in his life. It was humiliating to be a young mother walking around. An infant, not married, no ring on her finger. People tried to play like they were so used to seeing single black mothers all the time but the truth was they still judged you. She was a stereotype and she knew it. Even though Kerron promised her time and again she wouldn't be. Regardless of how he'd grown up, she had been born into a two-parent family and wanted the same for their son. She didn't know if she could fully forgive the blatant disrespect and cheating but Kerron hadn't even come begging back. That was a blow to her already fragile ego. After all. It's not like Kerron had cheated on her with a female of her caliber. He'd brought a homely white bitch who looked like she weighed 350 pounds and had to at least be fifty-five years old into their bed. No to mention, there was no condom on his dick.

"Look, Cassie, I know you're not a cruel person. Baby, please just get in touch with my people and let them know I'm in here and I need a lawyer. Can you at least do that for me, baby? I know I fucked up. Bad. But baby please don't kick me when I'm down. Please don't do a nigga like that," Kerron begged.

Cassie heard someone yell his time was up on the phone. Cassie didn't even answer him. She just hung up the phone. Mainly because

she felt like she was going to cry. How was this worthless ass nigga making her feel like she'd be doing him wrong not to say shit to his mama? she pondered.

Cassie looked over at KJ who she'd put in his swing during the phone call. Jesus help me. What should I do? KJ gave her a wide toothless grin…looking just like his sorry ass daddy and she knew she had to grant him one last request.

Cassie banged on the door of the dilapidated bungalow Kerron's mother lived in. It was in desperate need of a paint job. Cassie had tried to prompt Kerron to possibly come by his mother's house and fix up a few things she noticed falling apart during visits to his mother's home, but Kerron had refused. His standard response was, "She got a nigga living over there with her. Let him do that shit!" It made Cassie cringe that he could be so cold-hearted toward his mother.

Cassie had just raised her fist to bang on the door again (the button to the doorbell was literally hanging out of the hole!) when the door swung open.

"Knock on this door like the goddamn police one more time and see if I don't reach out and slap your ass! What the hell is wrong with you? I had a late night!" She spat angrily a lit cigarette dangling from her lips.

"Hi, Ms. Aretha…you do know it's 5:30 pm right?"

"And? I said I had a late night! Where is my grandson at? You don't never bring the lil nigga by to see his nana."

"He's in the car, I just came by real quick to…,"

"Bring him in let me look at him a lil bit," Ms. Aretha said before walking away and leaving Cassie at the door.

Cassie threw her head back wanting to scream. All she wanted to do was relay a damn message now Kerron had her doing more than she wanted to do. Cassie wasn't worried about Kerron's mom seeing KJ. She'd been invited over numerous times since he was born. Ms. Aretha always refused instead wanting to be catered to. They had to always bring the baby over to her dilapidated, smoke-filled house. Cassie had acquiesced a few times but it grew old. Hell, she wasn't bowing down to her own parents in that respect, she'd be damned if she did it for Kerron's mama who always had something negative to say about her.

Cassie stomped over to the car to unbuckle KJ from his seat and grabbed his diaper bag.

"Let me take you in here to see your raggedy ass grandma, KJ," Cassie grumbled as she walked back in the house. It looked worse

than she remembered.

Cassie couldn't understand why. Kerron was one of three grown ass boys. His brothers lived around town but depending on what was going on with the bitches they were laid up with at the time, they always found themselves living back at home. Ms. Aretha walked back into the living room with a toothbrush in her mouth throwing her finger up in the air.

"I'll be back in a second." She gurgled, mouth full of toothpaste.

Cassie's stomach turned.

Good lord, this woman is a mess. She was happy to have no further ties with this family. Cassie didn't exactly feel like Kerron's family was going to have a major impact in her son's life. Funny how just over a month ago she'd considered herself part of the Davis family. She'd wanted to be married to Kerron more than anything. Cassie's eyes were slowly opened to some of the things her father spoke to her that life-changing day. Yes, she loved her son more than anything, but daddy was right. Out of all the men she could have chosen to start her family with, look who she picked.

"Whew! I feel like a new woman now that I brushed my damn teeth! Let me see this little crumb-snatcher!" Ms. Aretha crowed walking over to her and scooping KJ out of her arms. She snuggled his neck and gave him several kisses. KJ must not have minded because Cassie could hear him giggling.

"So now what brings you by? I'm sure glad to see my grandbaby. You look good, where are you and Kerron off to? He ain't showed his black ass over here in weeks!"

"Well Ms. Aretha, Kerron and I actually broke up about a month ago and we're not getting back together," Cassie stated adamantly.

Ms. Aretha tooted her lips up.

"What he did? What he do girl?"

"Well, Kerron has done, or rather NOT done a lot. But the final straw was me walking into our home and finding him in bed with a fat ass white woman."

Ms. Aretha jumped up from the couch.

"What the fuck you say? Now see goddamn niggas these days don't have no couth! You know damn well you ain't supposed to bring the jump-off to your damn house!"

Cassie sat there shocked.

"Ms. Aretha, how about you're not supposed to cheat at all. That's more like right."

"Chile, please. All men cheat. That shit don't have nothin' to do with us. Men will have the finest woman at home, loyal as hell, takes care of the kids and cook her ass off and still want to dip their dirty dick in something new every now and then! It's just the name of the

game. If more women realized that, it wouldn't be so many single mothers out here. Kids growing up without a family."

Cassie sat there floored at this ignorant woman's train of thought. Even more so because with all this apparent "settling" Ms. Aretha was an advocate of, she didn't have a man her damn self. How?

Cassie decided to just get to the point of her visit, so she could leave and get to her party.

"Well, look, Ms. Aretha, like I said, Kerron and I are no longer together but he called me a few hours ago 'cuz he's gotten himself in more trouble. He's gotten locked up again. Dumb ass, you know he was already out on bond. With my two thousand dollars might I add. Needless to say, I'll never get that back. So, he wanted me to contact you."

Ms. Aretha's eyes bucked.

"What the nigga want me to do? I ain't got no damn money. Let alone for that foolishness. Uh-uh, baby! Not a spare dime. Hell, I'm on the verge of asking my boys for a little myself. Kerron, Derron and Gerron need to be laying a few dollars in my hand for raising their hard-headed asses." Ms. Aretha ranted on as she stood up and handed KJ back to me.

As ignorant acting, as she was, Cassie did know she loved her boys.

"Now see this shit got me stressed the hell out!" she said reaching for her pack of cigarettes.

"Okay now what we gon' do? I can't let my boy sit in no damn jail cell. So, what's the game plan? How much you got?" Ms. Aretha asked with a lit cigarette now dangling from her lips.

Cassie looked around the shabby living room quizzically. Surely, she didn't think she was contributing another dime to her son's wayward activities? I think the fuck not! She thought

"You didn't hear me say Kerron and I are no longer together? I'm just here to pass along this message to you, Ms. Aretha. I'm not doing anything."

"Look, you young hoes get on my god damn nerves! Now I don't give a damn what you're talking about 'y'all ain't together'. Y'all together for life because you laid down and pushed out his son! You and Kerron are connected for life. Now my son may not be the best nigga, but if you was down and out, he wouldn't leave you and that baby twisting in the wind. I know that much. My son loves you. Now you look like you're doing good. We need to come up with a plan to get Kerron out of jail. My boy is a good looking young man! What do you think they'll do to him in jail?"

Was everyone in this family missing chromosomes or what? KJ started whining a bit so instead of dashing for the door, Cassie decided to give him a bottle real fast before getting back on the road.

“Like I said, Ms. Aretha, I’m just giving you the message. Before I left the house I did look up the charges online. Kerron is facing real time. Up to twenty years. He said he’s going to need you to get him a lawyer. With these drug charges, I’m pretty sure he’s going to want more than a public defender,” Cassie said.

What more did Ms. Aretha want from her? Cassie had already found out something very important about herself during her time with Kerron. She was not about to be ride or die for a no-good ass man. At all. Had Kerron treated her better, maybe her attitude would have been different, but truth be told, she’d been a single woman taking care of herself and her son the entire time they’d live together. Yes, he’d come through on the rent, but that was it. That was where Kerron thought his responsibilities towards her began and ended. She deserved more.

“Look, I know you at least have access to some money. Kerron told me your family is living good over there in Orland Park. Don’t your daddy run a bank or some shit like that? Maybe you can take out a loan. I know your square ass got good credit! Your mama makes advertisements for magazines and TV right? I know your people’s money is long! Tell them you need some help!”

Oh hell no.

Ms. Aretha continued, “Now you know good and goddamn well we ain’t got it. You see how I’m over here living. At the end of the day, you and Kerron are just as much family and me and him are. So how you gon’ help my son out of this fix?” Ms. Aretha asked Cassie through narrowed eyes.

This lady was crazy as hell.

Let me get the fuck up outta here, Cassie thought. She quickly pulled the bottle out of KJ’s mouth with a pop! Her poor baby’s mouth was still sucking but his little greedy ass was just going to have to wait.

“Okay, Ms. Aretha. I came by and delivered the message like Kerron asked me to. If he calls again, I’m not accepting any phone calls. He’s going to have to get in touch with you from here on out,” Cassie said standing to her feet.

“You a real piece of work with your uppity ass! There my son was acting like you were the holy grail and the second there’s a storm you’re out in the wind. Cassie, I considered you like a daughter,” Ms. Aretha uttered shaking her head ruefully.

“How?”

“What do you mean?”

“How have you ever considered me a daughter? When I’ve called you asking you to just speak to Kerron about staying out of trouble and getting a job, you said that wasn’t your place. I’ve called you

twice when I was pregnant, Ms. Aretha saying we were low on food and could I borrow at least twenty dollars until I got paid. Not your son…but me. You said you had to keep your money to yourself. Not that you didn't have it. You just didn't have it to help me. So, if that was treating me like a daughter, I must have been the daughter you hate. You've never shown me a bit of kindness. Not to mention KJ. When have you ever asked to even see him? Now you expect me to have all this loyalty to your sorry ass son? I can't with you. I gotta go," Cassie growled grabbing Kj's diaper bag and walking out the door.

Ms. Aretha followed behind her angrily shouting.

"You're gonna regret doing my baby boy like this! Ain't nobody gonna love his son right! You ain't gon' find another nigga who wants to raise someone else's baby! When Kerron gets out, you'll wish you never did my boy like this. I hope he don't take your skinny, yella ass back either!"

Cassie could see the neighbors standing outside listening. It was embarrassing as hell. She quickly buckled her seat belt and backed out of the trash littered driveway.

Fuck Ms. Aretha and her sorry ass son. KJ is better off without that family and Kerron, she thought. Here it was supposed to be Cassie's big day and these people were trying to ruin it. Well, not today. This was truly her new start in life. All raggedy, loose ends are now cut. Cassie's cell-phone rang and without paying attention, she went ahead and answered.

"Hello?"

"Bae, it's me. Did you get in touch with my mama? Y'all come up with a plan to get me out?"

"Kerron, how the hell are you calling me? Ain't phone hours over?"

Kerron snickered through the line.

"You know a nigga always got a connect somewhere. One of my boys is in here and got a cell phone."

"Well look, it just so happens I'm leaving your mom's house right now. I gave her what little information you told me but from now on, you'll need to speak with her directly. This is not my issue…"

"Baby I'm always going to be your issue. Just like you mine. I know damn well you better not be treating me like this because you think you got another nigga. You better not have my son around another nigga," Kerron grumbled, his voice low and threatening.

"Kerron get off my goddamn phone. We're over with. Don't call me ever again. Any number I don't recognize I will not be answering from here on out. The only thing you need to know is that I got my back and your son's since you don't give him a second thought. Trust and

believe I'ma make sure he's always good. Goodbye!" Cassie shouted before hanging up on his sorry ass.

Chapter Seven

Cassie slowed down driving a bit as she checked her phone to make sure she pulled down the right street. It was crazy to her. The neighborhood Tramella lived in, Lincoln Park, was upscale like a muthafucka. Although Cassie didn't grow up in the city, she'd always known that Lincoln Park was where all of the white folks with big, old, stupid money lived. Although she grew up in ritzy ditzy suburban Orland Park where the average home was worth more than $700,000, the rowhouses that lined Lincoln Park's streets were worth more than $1 million.

Crazy it may seem, Cassie who once enjoyed a youth filled with privileged, now spent the last year living a life of the average struggling single black mother. Her apartment on the South Side was cruddy and old. Not as bad as Porscha's, but it wasn't anything to write home about. Her Altima was a typical basic bitch whip. Although she now had a new source of income that was going to upgrade her lifestyle, for the past year and some months, her go-to's for shopping were the usual for most 'po' black folk – Wal-Mart, Save-A-Lot, Dollar Store and Aldi. That's it. But now, as she scanned the dusky Lincoln Park street looking for parking, she felt so fucking out of place. It was as if she was some child from the ghetto being exposed to something nice for the first time. But goddamn, as Cassie finally secured a spot and did her best to parallel park on the crowded street, all types of numbers were running her head. Are they paying the CNAs at Morning Star Healthcare this well to live out here? How in the fuck did Tramella afford a mortgage on a townhouse possibly worth nearly or more than $1 million? If this luxury was all due to having gainful employment at Morning Star, Cassie now knew for sure she definitely made the right move.

As it was, Cassie was already counting her money before she even got it. She'd pulled out her beloved journal several times during training to write things down for her vision board. She'd add pictures from magazines, outfits for herself and KJ. Now that it seemed like she would finally be making some real money, there were a lot of things

she wanted. But first on the list was paying her parents back for the few loans they'd given her. After finally coming to the conclusion everything her Daddy said about Kerron had come to pass (with the exception of him having other kids), Cassie now wanted to get back on good terms with her father. Daddy turned out to be one-hundred percent correct about the struggle she'd go through by being so short-sighted and impulsive. Literally, nearly every single thing Franklin warned eventually manifested as truth. And now that she had this new job, she wanted to prove to her father that she was going to do right and try to put herself back onto a path of success and future prosperity.

In addition to Cassie wanting to desperately repair the relationship between herself and her father, she also realized she needed him in her life more than ever now. With Kerron being in jail for Lord only knows how long, her son needed a stable father figure in his life. Cassie may not have agreed with some of her father's views. However, some things could never be disputed about Franklin Pierce. He always took care of home. He'd always been an active father in her life and put Cassie and her mother first. That was the backbone of being a man as far as she was concerned. She could never imagine her daddy putting her mother through all the things Kerron had done to her in one short year. Without a doubt she wanted, no, NEEDED to be back in his good graces. But her pride wouldn't allow her to show her face fully until she could chunk down large amounts of the debt she owed her parents. The one good thing she could say is when speaking with her mother during the last month, she hadn't needed to ask for any further assistance. The next time she met her mother for lunch, she intended on at least having a thousand dollars to pay back towards her loans. She owed $4,000 total. Cassie didn't intend on splurging on anything until it was paid in full.

"2020 Cambridge Avenue. Okay, this is it," Cassie mumbled as she finally parked and gawked in awe of the luxurious looking row of townhomes lining the street. Damn! *Anything Tramella tells me to do, it's done,* she thought. Cassie counted the cars lining the ave. All foreign car brands. Cassie recognized that few of the whips belonged to her fellow future co-workers. Tramella had a black Mercedes, Prenisha a BMW and Sharquita had a high-end Audi. Her own 2013 Nissan Altima was falling apart. When she'd left her parent's home, it had been in perfect condition. That was until Kerron got hold of it. Now the driver's side rear door was dented in and couldn't be opened, and the back bumper was being held up with duct tape. Cassie had thought her insurance would cover the damage, but she'd soon discovered she wasn't able to really turn in a claim without a ton of lies. She hadn't been aware until that incident that Kerron was, in fact,

driving with a suspended license.

Cassie had parked behind Prenisha's car very much embarrassed. Her car definitely looked out of place in the street amongst the other cars. Hell, it looked out of place in the entire neighborhood. Cassie sat there in quiet contemplation looking down at her outfit. She felt dumb as hell walking in there with the thrift store outfit on. Granted, when she'd put it on she thought she looked good. She'd been able to maintain her looks somewhat. Fortunately, she'd had a ton of M.A.C cosmetics color products she could still use but long ago she'd been relegated to using Maybelline foundation. She couldn't afford anything else. Her ass wouldn't know what if felt like to sit in the chair of a salon. That fateful night she'd run out of her parents' house, it was a good thing she'd taken that bag full of ponytails and wigs because she hadn't been able to get her hair done at all. Nevertheless, she was proud to say she'd become a pro at flat-ironing her own hair. Prior to hard times, she'd never cared to learn how to use the expensive tool she'd frivolously purchased one day at the mall.

I'ma go in here looking like Raggedy Ann, Cassie thought. She'd seen everyone on the job and in and out of the office over the course of the last month, but this would be her first time getting together with the rambunctious group of ladies socially. But fuck it though. Tramella went out of her way to look out for Cassie and throw her a little shindig. Cassie know knew soon as she'd handle her responsibilities, she could worry about getting fly. Because once she'd start working on Monday, she was staying in a pair of scrubs! She was going to be adamant on working overtime every day she could get it. Cassie hopped out of the car, grabbed KJ, his diaper bag and made her way up to the red oak door of Tramella's townhouse.

Cassie rang the doorbell shaking like a leaf. Seconds later the door swung open by this statuesque, dark-skinned young dude she'd laid eyes on in a minute. Who the hell was this?

He stood about 6'2, had smooth dark chocolate skin, and had soft, Indian Ocean waves lining his perfectly shaped head. Then the nigga had the nerve to have some hazel brown eyes.

"Hello, can I help you?" he said in a deep, semi-raspy voice.

Hearing his voice made Cassie's pussy tremble a bit.

"I, umm, is Tramella home?" Cassie stammered.

"Yeah, she's home. Oh wait, are you Cassie? So, you're the reason I had to clean up around here today, huh? Come on in!" He said scornfully. Was he being that serious? Cassie got nervous for a second before his sexy, thick lips broke into a grin.

"I'm just fuckin' wit, you girl. Congratulations on passing your certifications and shit! Here let me take lil man for you."

Cassie nervously handing the baby carrier over to him.

"I'm Vontavis by the way – Tramella's son."

"Oh okay! Tramella talks about you all the time. It's nice to finally meet you."

"Yeah I'm sure she's running her fuck ass mouth about me," Vontavis rasped under his breath but due to the deepness of his voice, Cassie heard him.

Cassie tried to keep pace with his brisk steps as he walked through the luxurious townhouse but was also trying to look at everything. The house was laid the fuck out! If she wasn't already aware of the fact she and her son were living in a slummy apartment, she was now. *Yes, I have to get my money up ASAP,* Cassie thought enviously. She knew Tramella did do home visits with several long-standing clients but to her knowledge, she also worked a lot in the office and did recruiting for new CNAs as well.

Shit, if that was the case, Cassie knew eventually she had to be on Tramella's level, working inside the office, doing more high-level managerial shit. Boss bitch moves indeed.

"Aww shit! Here she is, the woman of the night!!!" Tramella crowed the second they entered the kitchen. Vontavis sat KJ's carrier on one of the kitchen chairs and quickly turned to leave.

"Damn, hold up Vontavis! I wanted to introduce you to Cassie," Tramella said her lips turned down.

"I answered the door for her…I already introduced myself," Vontavis replied only stopping long enough to grab a paper plate and load it with what appeared to be lemon-pepper wings. He opened the stainless-steel double door fridge and grabbed a beer.

"I'll be in my room if you need anything," Vontavis mumbled cutting his eyes at his mother and walking out.

Okaaay, I don't know what that's all about with his fine self but it ain't none of my business! Cassie thought.

"Girl I'm glad you passed with flying colors! We need some dependable people on the team. I love the money, but this overtime is wearing me out! I barely have time to lay up under my nigga since I'm working so much," Sharquita said taking a sip of her drink.

Sharquita was slightly slender, red boned and had a fierce devil red Brazilian weave stitched into her head.

The main boss bitch and hostess Tramella smacked her teeth and rolled her eyes. "Chile, please. I be trying to tell you young girls, if the nigga ain't working as hard as you if not harder then get rid of his mothafuckin' ass! What kinda good man is gon' let you work all kinda hours to bring in a good check and the nigga gon' come in and kick his feet up after eight measly hours? You better listen to Auntie Mella! I'm trying to put you up on game," she barked and then took a sip from her margarita.

Tramella, also known by man as Mella, had an overpowering presence. More like an aggressive aura that shone everywhere she went. The tallest of all of the women in the room, she towered nearly six feet tall. Her frame was very muscular; her skin tone high yellow. Cassie wondered if Tramella was mixed with something, but she hadn't bothered to ask, at least not yet. Cassie didn't know Tramella's exact age, but based on her brief story, she presumed she was in her mid-30s. Tramella told her she was once a college basketball player on the verge of going to the WNBA. However, when she got pregnant with Vontavis in college, she was had to stop playing basketball and eventually dropped out. Aside from her large and tall physical appearance (which was slightly menacing), Tramella had long golden locks running down her back. Tonight, she was wearing a black slick tube crop top with matching pants. With her cut up arms showing, she had sleeves of tattoos running down each arm.

Cassie sat there with a wing to her lips taking in every word. After everything she'd just gone through with Kerron, she was willing to listen to anyone who was doing better than her.

"Well, Auntie Mella, I'm damn sure listening. After a solid month of not hearing from KJ's daddy, he had the nerve to call me from jail right before I was about to leave the house tonight," Casie mumbled as she munched on the chicken wing.

"I'm sure that sorry ass nicca did! I'm sorry, baby," Tramella said waving her hand towards KJ. "But baby now is the time to start anew. When I saw you at Wal-Mart that day, something told me you just needed a hand up. Follow me and in six months you and baby boy are going to be living good. Mark my words."

"It's true. I was in a homeless shelter when I met Auntie Tramella that day at McDonald's," Prenisha confessed. She slightly favored Sharquita in looks, the only difference was her weave was sky blue.

"Yep! Testify! This ain't about me tootin' my own horn baby. But if you listen to someone with your best interest at heart, you can pull yourself out of any situation. That and wanting better for yourself," Tramella said standing up clapping her hands. Tramella grabbed her margarita glass and pulled it up to her lips.

"You do a lot for us, Auntie! We appreciate you." All the ladies seemed to say in unison. Tramella had the nerve to look bashful when in all honesty she had been tooting her own horn. But Cassie didn't mind one bit. If you did good and helped people that was something to be proud of as far as she was concerned. There were too many people in the world who simply turned a blind eye to people that were in need when they could do the smallest thing for someone to help them turn their life around.

Even though Cassie's money wasn't rolling in the way she wanted

it to just yet, she'd already been blessed by now having a job that paid her more. She'd done several small gestures to pay if forward from the day she got her first training paycheck from Morning Star. One morning on her way to training, she'd pulled into the drive-thru at McDonald's and after paying for her order, she looked behind her in her rear view mirror and saw a rusty mini-van with a few frazzled looking children on the inside. A stringy-haired white woman was behind the wheel. Initially, she wasn't going to do shit for a white woman given she still had that burning image of that old fat white hoe in her bed fucking Kerron in her head. But that morning in the drive-thru, it was as if God spoke to her in that very moment for her to do something miraculous for the family who looked possibly in need.

Speaking of that fat white hoe – truth be told, even though that fat white bitch was fucking her man, she wasn't to blame. Yes, Cassie could only hope that other women would respect her relationship and kept their hands off her man but at the end of the day that was all on Kerron. If he showed her no respect or loyalty, why would anyone else? She still recalled that woman asking who she was. It was quite possible that woman didn't even know Kerron was in a relationship with a newborn baby.

So on that note, Cassie was not about to start hating white women due to having a sorry ass man. Cassie asked the cashier how much was the total for the mini-van behind her. When he said $26.95, Cassie handed over her debit card with a cheerful and giving heart. After all, had Tramella not shown her that same mercy that day at Walmart, there was no telling what kind of situation she would be in right now. It was meant to happen. It made Cassie smile to think how surprised and grateful the woman must have felt knowing she could spend her money on something else for her children that day.

"Let's lay the baby down, he's asleep and we can let loose. I know y'all been working a lot and we sure appreciate it," Tramella chimed.

A few minutes later, KJ was situated on some blankets on Tramella's huge couch and the ladies were back in the kitchen laughing and talking. Prenisha had turned on Spotify through Tramella's high-tech fridge and the drinks were flowing all around. Food and drink were aplenty. Cassie couldn't recall the last time she'd let her hair down.

"Girl, I'm nosy! I've been wanting to ask you something, but I didn't want to come off rude!" Prenisha said teetering on her feet drunkenly

"What is it?" Cassie asked curiously. She'd had two drinks and was feeling good but she wasn't too far gone. Her guard was down, and she truly felt comfortable with these three ladies.

"Girl, is all that your hair?"

Before Cassie could even respond, Prenisha's hands were in her scalp.

"Damn it is! It's thick too! Whatchu be usin'?"

"The cheapest thing possible. I haven't been able to afford to do anything to this head of mine. Hell, I be looking at y'alls. As soon as I pay a few bills I'ma treat myself to a whole day of beauty," Cassie said.

"Well, you a dime for sure. These clients gonna love your cute ass! Let that work for you," Sharquita said winking at her.

Cassie was confused as to what that even meant but she was rolling with it. Whatever these ladies were doing, was obviously working and she wanted in.

"That's enough work talk ladies! There will be plenty of time for you two to show Cassie the ropes come Monday. Matter of fact, I already worked it out where Cassie will be shadowing with you next week, Prenisha. The following week, Sharquita. That way I know you're getting a good training before you go out on your own. Some of these clients can be a whole hot ass mess. But listen to these two and you'll just fine. Now enough of work. Shoot, we should have invited some niggas over here."

"Don't play, Auntie. You know Mr. Micky ain't gon' let you do nothing of the sort!" Prenisha said snickering loudly.

"Who is Mr. Micky?" Cassie asked curiously.

"Oh, he's the CEO of Morning Star. He also owns a lot of the properties around the office. You'll meet him in due time, baby," Tramella said tooting her lips.

The ladies spent the remainder of the evening laughing and talking. Cassie did have to tend to KJ a few times during the evening but all the ladies enjoyed him and took turned bouncing the cute, plum baby on their knees. It was after one when Tramella extended the offer for everyone to just stay the night. Prenisha and Sharquita stated they wanted to stay but decided to leave since they had both picked up some overtime hours in the morning. Cassie was all too happy to stay and didn't hesitate to accept the invitation. After being in such a comfortable environment for hours, she felt at home. She was in no rush to get back to the harsh reality of where she lived.

Tramella walked Cassie to the upstairs portion of her home and it was as elegant as downstairs. Cassie was in awe. Her parents had a nice home but Tramella's tastes were over the top. Lots of ivory and gold throughout. Lavish is the word that came to mind. Cassie couldn't deny she was green with envy. Not in the way that she felt Tramella didn't deserve it but she wanted it for herself.

Cassie was going to listen to every piece of advice Tramella had to offer her. It was as if she'd finally found a role model. Yes, her own

mother was a career woman and had a ton of accomplishments for Cassie to admire but even after all the shenanigans she'd been through with Kerron the last year, Cassie still yearned for the flashy lifestyle. Just not a flashy wannabe thug nigga like Kerron. Her taste in men had changed but she still wanted material things. Why not? There was nothing wrong with wanting the finer things in life. Just like Tramella seemed to have.

Tramella set Cassie and KJ up in her guest bedroom then retired to her own bedroom for the night. She'd given Cassie a few toiletries and a nightgown so she could get comfortable. After changing her sleeping son's diaper and putting a fresh onesie on him Cassie patted him back to sleep. It was close to three in the morning when she padded down the hall to the bathroom to take a quick shower and brush her teeth. All the liquor had her feeling hot and sweaty.

Twenty minutes later as late as it was Cassie felt rejuvenated. She thought about turning on the television and watch a few late-night reruns until she fell asleep. She cleaned up after herself then opened the bathroom door only to be startled by Vontavis standing at the door.

"Oh, I'm sorry!" Cassie said her eyes downcast. Vontavis was standing there in nothing but his pajama bottoms. His chest and arms rippled with muscles and even on his dark skin, the black tattoos popped on his skin. Cassie had to look away for fear of ogling the handsome young man. She wasn't even sure of his age. But she knew he was off limits. This was her new mentors' son. It had been quite some time since she'd had sex, hell even before kicking Kerron out it had been several weeks. Who was in the mood to fuck when you were in the midst of struggling? Not her.

"No problem. Look, I don't even know your ass, but don't let those three birds…yes, that includes my Mama, get you in no shit."

Cassie's eyes widened but she didn't say a word. Instead, she scurried back down the hall to the bedroom and climbed under the Egyptian cotton sheets. She closed her eyes to sleep but couldn't shake the ominous feeling she now had.

Chapter Eight

A few days later…

"Yeah, you know, Micky, he a real cool muhfucka. I know him from way back when. We grew up together out in Roseland. We used to kick it from time to time back in the day but that was then. We just strictly business now," Tramella explained as she and Cassie walked through the parking lot of Morning Star Healthcare Agency, Inc.

It was 7:45 AM, Monday Morning. Today was Cassie's first day and she couldn't be any more excited to start her new "career". Although her parents were pleased to hear that she was beginning to take her life more serious and was making the right moves towards making better decisions, they were still a bit wary about her CNA job. They wanted her to not get too super-comfortable with the position and get her mind focused on completing her bachelor's and eventually getting her master's. Cassie considered their advice and was now contemplating switching her major to nursing or possibly pre-med. Although she excelled in her science and math classes in high school, she never saw herself working in the healthcare industry up until now. Obviously, her main motivation right now was money, but Cassie presumed that if Morning Star exposed her to great career possibilities within nursing, even possibly medicine, she was going to definitely switch some things up at school. Besides, creative writing was something she felt she could pursue later on in life and even take classes on the side.

Morning Star was located of 79th and Cottage Grove on the city's South Side. Although the area had a notoriety for being a tad dangerous (many residents called the area "Killa Grove"), 79th and Cottage Grove was one of the busiest intersections on the Southside and was kind of a nexus between the what people referred to as the Eastside (part of the Southside right off the Lake) and the heart of the mid and far-South Side.

Tramella also told Cassie that Micky owned the entire strip mall that Morning Star was located in. When Cassie was taking her

certification classes for the past few weeks, she'd always wondered about who the CEO of Morning Star was and no one ever made mention of him up until now. Guess it all made sense, Cassie figured since Tramella explained that Micky was more like a passive manager and delved a lot of managerial responsibility to her. In other words, Tramella was pretty much the boss. Micky just focused on making sure the money was right, and if there were any outstanding problems, he'd step in.

The two women walked through the door and were instantly greeted by Maria, a porky Latina receptionist who too was a CNA but stayed in the office to answer phones and schedule appointments.

"Good Morning, Ladies, how was your weekend?"

"Hey, Maria! Chile, we had a blast! Too bad you couldn't make it!"

"Yeah, sorry about that. My son was so damn sick. He's better now."

"Oh yeah, you were tellin' me that! How's Diego?" Tramella inquired with a look of concern on her face.

"He cool now. Just had a bad fever." Suddenly Maria's phone rung. "I'll holla at ya'll later. Hey, Cassie!" Maria smiled and then picked up the phone. "Morning Star Healthcare Agency, this is Maria. How can I help you?"

Cassie didn't say anything since Maria was on the phone. She just smiled and waved. Since meeting her, Cassie liked Maria. There was something warm and gregarious about her. In reality, all the women so far at Morning Star were like that. Guess since all of them were apparently securing the bag, they had no worries in the world, and there was no reason to be off-putting or mean to anyone.

Tramella continued to give Cassie the run down about Micky as they made their way down the hallway all the way to the back to Micky's executive office. Once they arrived at the door, Cassie noticed the huge "CEO" sign on the door. Tramella knocked twice.

"Come in," a low and deep voice from the other barked. Tramella opened the door and the two women walked in.

Micky was sitting at his desk staring at a laptop computer screen. Before Cassie could even take notice of the man who was her boss' boss, her eyes glued immediately to the stacks of cash that lined his mahogany desk. Cassie's mouth flung wide open in surprise. Why were these big bundles of fresh-looking cash just sitting on top of the desk? she wondered.

Micky looked up and then smiled. "Oh, hey Mella."

"Wassup, I see you made it back in town. How was Cancun?"

"Shit, crackin'! I need to stack up some chedda and move down there. I'm got my ass up here in muhfuckin' Chi-beria; nuts about to freeze the fuck off."

Mella huffed and rolled her neck. “Damn, dude. Morning Star’s number one rule is to show professionalism at all times, especially in front of new employees!” she screeched as she held her waist.

“Oops, my bad. I’m sorry. Who is this? Is this Ms. Cassie?”

“Yup. Our top graduate! Today is her first official day. She’s gonna be shadowing Prenisha and Sharquita for the next few weeks until she can get the hang of everything. Then, she’ll be on her own!”

Micky stood up. He was medium height, probably no taller than six feet. He was a bit on the heavier side, looking like he weighed close to three hundred pounds. Tramella told Cassie that back in the day Micky used to be a professional bodybuilder but had to stop after he snapped his rotator cuff. Guess all of that muscle turned into fat, Cassie thought. He had a shiny bald head, wide dark brown eyes, and a huge jet black beard. A pair of throwback black and gold Run DMC Cazal glasses adorned his face. Obviously, his size didn’t deter him from still dressing sharp. The big nigga was dressed to the nine in a gray pinstripe suit. Micky then walked over from his desk and approached Cassie, extending his hand out to shake her hand. That was when Cassie immediately noticed this man was wearing at least a $50,000 Audemar watch on his right hand.

Cassie extended her hand and nervously smiled. “Good morning, sir. I’m Cassandra Pierce. But everyone calls me Cassie.”

“Cool, cool. Yeah, everyone calls me Micky. Real name is Michelangelo, but just call me Micky. How old are you?”

“Just turned nineteen, sir,” Cassie responded as Micky still held her hand.

The way he was staring her up and down was as if he wanted to strip her down bare and eat out every orifice in her body as if it were her last meal. Cassie immediately grew a bit intimidated, scared and even slightly disgusted because she could look in the man’s eyes and tell he was mentally fucking her. She lightly tugged her hand back and then produced another smile.

“You don’t have to keep calling me sir. You makin’ me feel like an old man and shit. I’m only forty. Anyways, you excited to get started? I hear you might be thinking about changing your major to nursing? We also hire registered nurses too!”

Cassie took note not to call Micky sir. “Yup!” she responded. “Yeah, I’m gonna talk to my guidance counselor about switching things up a bit. I might transfer to a new school though if that happens. UIC has one of the best nursing schools in the region.”

“Yeah, I know. We got a few people who went through there.”

Buzz. Buzz. Buzz. Micky rumbled his pants pockets and pulled out his iPhone. He stared at the number floating on the phone’s screen with his wide eyes now turned to slits. “Hrrrm,” he mumbled. “Yeah,

lemme take this call. I'mma talk to ya'll later. Mella, come back down in fifteen. We got some things to take care of," Micky said and then quickly answered the phone. "Waddup, fool. You talked to Papi?"

"Anyways, girl, let's go meet up with Quita and Prenisha so you can get started…" Tramella and Cassie made their way out of the executive suite and then walked down another corridor to another office. Sharquita and Prenisha were inside chopping it up about some dick appointment gone wrong last night.

"…Yesssss, bitch! Nigga gon' have the nerve to wanna hit it from the back but was only workin' with six inches. I was like, 'Boy, what is you gon do with that little dick?' Baby! He got some muhfuckin' mad! I still let him fuck out of pity though. And he ate my ass. Thirsty, lame ass fuck nigga," Sharquita laughed as she smacked on some hot flamin' Cheetos.

"Damn, Sharquita, I thought you said you was doing this juice fast with me?" Tramella asked.

"Bitch, I thought you said it was staring next Monday!"

"Hoe, you a muhfuckin' lie! You know good and damn well I meant this Monday. Them Cheetos gon be the death of you. I showed you that video on Facebook where that white boy said that red dye can light on fire. Bitch, you gon get stomach cancer!"

"Bitch, we all gotta die one day. If I'mma die young, I'd wanna die munchin' on some Cheetos and suckin' on a green apple airhead!"

Tramella rolled her eyes. "I knew yo ignant ass was gonna flake. Anyways, I gotta talk to Micky in about ten minutes. Ya'll go ahead and start getting Cassie ready for her first day. I'll holla at ya'll at lunch time."

"Where we goin'?" Sharquita asked.

"Bitch, I got my smoothie with me. Question is, where YOU goin?"

Sharquita playfully rolled her eyes as she popped a Cheeto puff in her mouth. "Bitch, you so damn judgmental, but I still fucks with you. Anyways, I'm thinkin' about that new Jerk spot on 55th and Lake Park over in Hyde Park. I hear they got these bomb ass jerk turkey tacos for on the low."

"Shit, that do sound good. Fuck this smoothie shit. Hit me up when ya'll ready to leave," Tramella snickered.

"Talkin' 'bout I'm the flake. Bitch, I knew yo ass was gon crumble under pressure. CRUMBLE! Leave that smoothie shit from them skinny, no booty white bitches," Sharquita laughed and smacked on some more Cheetos.

"Whatever. Next Monday for sure," Tramella said. She then turned to Cassie and said, "Alrighty, girl! Good luck! I wanna hear good reports by the end of the day!"

"Thank you! I won't disappoint you!" Cassie replied. The two of

them hugged and then Tramella made her way out of the office and back to Micky's

"Damn, where you found her from again?" Micky asked with a huge ass smile across his face. A devious smile – a smile like a man who was going to use all he had to get a taste of that new, sweet cooch that came into his presence about twenty minutes ago.

"Wal-Mart, and no. Don't even think about it. I don't want you tryin' to run her off and shit. Remember the last time what you did to Taniece. Had that girl almost get this shit shut down," Tramella barked back. She was sitting directly in front of Micky rolling up a big ass blunt with some fire ass cush Vontavis gave her.

"Man, I learned from my mistakes. Wal-Mart, huh? She got a nigga…"

"No, apparently his lame ass got arrested for some drug shit."

"Oh, well. But man, she look like she got a juicy tight ass pussy. My dick was about to explode earlier thinkin' about her," Micky sniggered.

"She's off limits. We gotta use her for the new system. Besides, I found her first, so it's only right I get a taste first. Then you can have her."

Micky smacked his teeth. "Yo 'ole dike ass. Aiight, bet. You get it first, then it's all me."

"Shiiiiit, when I get done with her, she ain't gon want dick. I'mma fuck her so good, I'mma have her thinking my fake ass two-sided dildo is more real her hair."

"That's her real hair too?!? Shit!"

"Yup! She a cutie too! A dumb ass, naïve cutie at that. That's why I know once we get her onto the system and start having her sign off on the Medicaid reimbursements, we gon be good to go."

"Hahaha, she's that naïve? How you know? That bitch in college. She got some sense."

"Yeah, book sense. But she's dumber than a box of dirt. The young bitch told me her sob story how her daddy kicked her out because she didn't wanna abort the baby. She ended up moving in with that clown ass nigga then he cheated on her with some fat white bitch from Bolingbrook. If I was in her shoes, I would've aborted the lil nigga. He's a cutie though. But I would've gotten rid of his ass."

"So, you would've gotten rid of Vontavis?"

"Shit, if I had to do it all over again, hell yeah. His big, weak ass. I'm only keeping him around 'cuz you make me. Other than that, I would've been sent him to go live with his fuck ass daddy out in North

Carolina." Tramella finished rolling the blunt. She took out a lighter from her jacket pocket and quickly warmed the blunt up to let the paper dry out.

Andrew, Vontavis' father, didn't want to have shit to do with Mella. After Vontavis was born, he moved far away to Charlotte and would want Vontavis to spend the summers with him. But as Vontavis got older and Mella realized Andrew was having a bigger influence on him, Mella finessed her way into getting full-custody over Vontavis and stopped sending him to go spend time with his father. Vontavis, eighteen, was pretty much used by both Mella and Micky to be their enforcer or fixer. Anytime they needed a young, big, built nigga to get some shit done, Vontavis was utilized in a capacity to intimidate or scare people. He didn't like doing it, but Micky was breaking him off some serious bread each month to work various assignments. Officially he was on the payroll as an office coordinator, but he didn't necessarily do office work and barely showed his face around the agency. He mostly "worked from home".

"Anyways, about the new system. I just hired this kid named Mark who's gonna be doing a little bit of IT, accounting and billing for us. I'll have him working side by side with young sweet pussy. So, we gon her start like Wednesday or some shit?" Micky asked.

"Nigga, no. You can't just throw her into this shit so quick. We gotta butter her young, dumb ass up some more. Make her feel like she's highly invaluable and needed. But I also wanna torture her ass to bit. Bring her ass to the fire with some nasty ass clients, have her ass in tears and then have her damn near wanting to quit. I'll make it seem like we don't want her to leave and then offer her the job. Make it seem like I had to pull strings. That way, in case some shit goes down, and we get audited by Medicaid or by the Countycare program, I can pull my card, ya feel me?"

"What you mean by card?"

"Force that bitch to lie for us. She won't resist either…"

"Damn, see, this is why I fucks with you, Mella. I mean, real shit. I know we had our lil thing back in the day, but damn, you a better business partner than a girlfriend."

Mella rolled her eyes. "Nigga, fuck you. Anyways, I got other shit to handle. I got that other young and dumb ghetto bitch named Shenaya I need to talk to. I'm tryin' to get her to work on one of our 'special' assignments."

"Yeah, ok. Well, let that be the last special assignment too. I keep tellin' you ain't no money in that shit."

Tramella smacked her teeth and rolled her eyes. "Man, it ain't about the money. I got plenty of that. I just like fucking with these bitches. I just like the power I have over these dumb ass hoes."

Micky panted and shook his head. “Girl, you crazy as fuck. Anyways, I’ll holla at you later. I gotta go make a drop. Hit my line later tonight. I got another big contract I wanna talk about. I’m thinkin’ about opening up another office out in the south suburbs around Lansing.”

“Aiight, nigga. You wanna go smoke first?”

“Nah, I’m good luv, enjoy…” Micky smiled.

“Lame…”

Tramella quickly got up from her seat and made her way back to the parking lot. She hopped in her Benz and took off to go meet up with Shenaya.

Chapter Nine

"Alright, girl…So like I said, I like using a dash of peppermint oil in the baths I give my patients. The oil makes them smell fresh all day, especially since some clients tend to shit on themselves and we can't get to them on time. But anywho, I know bathing these muhfuckas may seem weird at first, but you'll get used to it. Mr. James here don't usually cause problems. Anyways, I need a smoke. I'mma go ahead and let you handle this one by yourself," Prenisha explained.

Prenisha and Cassie were at the home of Mr. James Perkins, a 78-year-old old black man who was currently in the mid-stages of Alzheimer's disease. Mr. James was a retired police officer and if you would've saw him in the street in passing you would've easily thought Red Foxx came back from the dead to get on Esther's nerves again. Although the bungalow in Chatham he was staying in was his, his daughter Delonda was staying with him as well. She worked full-time as a police officer herself and needed help from Morning Star's exemplary CNA service to provide home health care for her ill father.

Prenisha pulled out her carton of Marlboro's and slapped them against her hand. She slapped a cig in her mouth and made her way out the room and then outside, leaving Cassie to take Mr. James into the bathroom and begin to bathe him.

Cassie stood there quiet and shocked as she nervously gawked at the old frail man. Finally, the hour had come that all she learned in her CNA class would need to be put to use. Everything seemed all fun and dandy at first, experimenting on mannequins inside the classroom. But now, sitting before her was a real live human being who had a myriad of needs that she was going to be fully responsible to take care of in a timely, respectful and professional manner.

Honestly, who knows what was going through her head, but it was almost as if Cassie never realized just how basic and grimy CNA work could be. It was told to her so often in her classes that CNAs are the frontline of dealing with the chronically infirmed. RNs had a made in the shade compared to what CNAs have to go through on a daily basis. But for some reason or another, Cassie, blinded by the prospect of making a lot of money in a short amount of time, never truly envisioned herself having to bathe, clothe and feed an old, dying man.

Yeah, yeah, yeah – she learned that assisting with baths and changing diapers was a part of her job responsibilities, but now the reality of what her CNA work really entailed was Ike Turner-smacking her hard in the face.

Elderly people weren't babies. And their bodies and their shit definitely wasn't going to smell young and innocent. From the moment Cassie and Prenisha stepped into Mr. James' house, they'd already smelled a foul odor coming from his room. It was his diaper, already soiled, and needed to be changed ASAP. That was the first thing Prenisha and Cassie did, so the young CNA rookie was already feeling a certain type of way. But now that she had to bathe him, she just wanted to hurry up (but obviously take her time) and get it over with so she could bounce and cool her mind.

Anyways – Mr. James just sat there on the bed, hands in lap, in his pajamas staring at nothing in particular. Cassie, girl, stop being scared. You gotta do what you gotta, you got this girl, she thought to herself and took a deep breath.

"Alright, Mr. James. Time for your morning bath," Cassie spoke. Delonda, Mr. James daughter, demanded that her father get bathed at least twice a day. The other bath would be done by Elgerthia, another home health aide-CNA working through Morning Star. Elgerthia worked three times a week in the evenings.

Mr. James was still silent. Didn't say a damn word. Cassie spent the next few minutes or so trying her best to get Mr. James out of his pajamas. With his shirt now off, his gray and nappy chest hair riddling his saggy, wrinkled manboobs, he suddenly he glanced up towards Cassie and smiled. Cassie produced a nervous smile and tilted her head. "Hey there," she mumbled.

Then Mr. James' smile turned into a nasty scowl. Old nigga started growling like an ole Mississippi hound dog trying to stop a burglar from coming onto his master's property. His eyes turned to slits and his breathing intensified a bit. "Roberta, where you been at, woman? Bitch, you cheatin' on me? I KNEW! BITCH, YOU CHEATIN' ON ME!"

Cassie jumped back and started to quiver. Oh shit! Fuck, fuck, fuck, this nigga got me confused with someone else, Cassie thought, looking a tad mortified.

"No, Mr. James, I'm not Roberta. My name is Ca-Cassie. Cassandra. Cassandra Pierce. I'm your CNA. I'm here to help you!" she muttered.

"BITCH! YOU 'OLE NASTY BALDHEADED NARROW BEHIND BITCH! I ALWAYS KNEW YOU WAS MESSIN' WITH MY BROTHER PERCY! YOU AND THAT NASTY, NO GOOD NICCA ALWAYS DID ME WRONG!"

Cassie trembled hearing Mr. James's ancient thunderous voice damn near shake the bedroom's walls. Fear entered her body. Where

was Prenisha at? Wherever she was, she needed to hurry up, finish smoking that muhfuckin' cigarette and get her ass in here to help her out. The way Mr. James was looking tense, Cassie just knew the old man and his demented mind was going to get her fucked up.

"Mr. James, please, no. You have me mixed up. I'm Cassie. I don't know who Roberta is!" Cassie screeched with her hands still shuddering.

"BITCH, STOP LYIN'!"

Cassie looked around and then stood back a bit, holding her hands.

"You know what! Where's my mothafuckin' pistol! I'm finne finally shoot yo cheatin' ass!" Mr. James barked as he then frantically searched the sheets of his bed. Although he was moving a tad slow, Cassie didn't want to risk it. She tried to meander her way around the man and then tried to escape the room, but before she could exit Prenisha stumbled right in.

"What's going on?" Prenisha asked, looking confused.

Cassie clutched her chest. "Girl, he thinks I'm Roberta. Who in the hell is that?"

Prenisha huffed and rolled her eyes. "Oh, he havin' another episode. He might gettin' you confused with his dead wife. Let me go simmer him down."

Prenisha shoved Cassie out the way. "MR. JAMES! Come on now, you actin' up again!"

"No, I'm not! I caught that triflin' heffa fuckin' Percy again! I'mm kill that hoe!"

"MR. JAMES! NO! That is Cassie! Roberta is DEAD. Been dead, Mr. James. For almost thirty years now!"

Mr. James dropped his guard a bit as his eyes locked onto Cassie. For a hot minute, the old man was so convinced Cassie was his deceased, philandering wife. However, the more he concentrated on her, the more he calmed down. "Oh," he mumbled. "Ya'll gon bathe me now? I'm ret to eat."

"Yes, Mr. James. Now come on! Let Cassie help you finish get out of these pajamas so we can make your favorite oatmeal, ok?' Prenisha consoled.

Ooooh, chile! What a life saver, Cassie thought as she too tried her best to simmer her nerves. Prenisha nodded over to Cassie, beckoning her back over to Mr. James.

Mr. James looked up at Cassie once more and smiled. "You so beautiful, young lady. So beautiful."

"Thank you, sir," Cassie replied taking a deep breath and smiling.

Once Cassie and Prenisha got Mr. James out of his clothes, they escorted him to the bedroom's adjacent bathroom and gave him a good twenty-minute bath. Prenisha taught Cassie the ropes and

mechanics of how to wash every nook and cranny of Mr. James' body. She also warned Cassie that from time to time some clients, including Mr. James, will defecate or urinate on themselves in the tub. Nonetheless, it was still their responsibility as a CNA to make sure everything was cleaned up. She told Cassie it didn't happen often, but when it did, just be prepared to cast aside her feelings and do a good job tidying up the bathroom and still give the client a good bath. The last thing Morning Star wanted was to have CNAs quitting on the spot, which then might get the agency in trouble with Medicare and the Illinois Department of Health and Human Services.

Cassie and Prenisha finished bathing Mr. James. They got him into his normal outfit; a t-shirt, some jeans, and some comfortable slips. They sat him in the living room, turned on his television and tuned into reruns of In The Heat Of The Night. Mr. James from then on didn't say a word. He was laser-focused into the flatscreen television watching Chief Gillespie's old fat white ass dig for truth from some alleged rapist. The two CNAs prepared Mr. James' breakfast, fed him.

"Alrighty, girl. Seems like you gettin' a handle of things. I'm 'bout to go head out and grab lunch with Sharquita and Mella. Give me a ring if you need anything or something else happens. You got my number," Prenisha said as she gathered her belongings and made her way out the door.

"Ok, cool. See you later," Cassie responded. She didn't sound too confident. Bitch, you better get confident. This is what you got yourself into, Cassie thought once Prenisha made her way out the door.

Cassie carefully watched Mr. James for the remainder of the day until 3 PM when Elgerthia came in and took over the shift. Soon afterward, Cassie said her goodbyes and made her way to KJ's daycare. She was in much of need of some quality rest to recuperate from an already seemingly stressful shift.

After picking KJ up from daycare, she headed to Jewel-Osco to go pick up a few things for dinner. She pulled into the parking lot and parked her car.

"Shit, today was a long ass day," she grumbled under breath. "Alright, lil man. Let's go in here and make this quick." Before Cassie could take off her seatbelt her cell phone vibrated. She glanced at the number and saw it was Kerron's mother, Ms. Aretha. "What this bitch want?" Cassie hissed. "She better not be on any bullshit."

She answered the phone, "Hello?"

"Cassie…"

“Yes….” Cassie rolled her eyes. Why was this trifling old lady sounding all sad and shit, Cassie wondered.

“Baby girl, I know the last time we saw each other we exchanged a few words, but as KJ’s grandma, I’m coming to you in a serious bind.”

Cassie rolled her doe eyes once more and huffed. “Ummm, Ms. Aretha, like I explained I am not in any position to help Kerron get bail money. And I am damn sure not about to—”

“That’s not why I’m callin you, baby girl,” Ms. Aretha interrupted. “I, umm, this…This is so embarrassing to say this, but I need help buying food. I absolutely have no money. I got my hours cut down at my job and I just had to dump everything into my mortgage. My two other knuckleheaded, not good for nothin’ ass sons can’t even help me out ‘cuz they got their own shit,” she explained.

Cassie took a deep breath, closed her eyes and exhaled. “So, what exactly are you asking for Aretha?”

“Don’t you have a LINK card?” Ms. Aretha was referring to a food stamps debit card.

“Yes…But I am barely using it,” Cassie replied.

“Well, can I at least hold it so I can buy some groceries for myself this week?”

Cassie had already fixed her mouth to tell her hell fucking no. Bitch, you ain’t getting shit from me. If you need food, hop in your ride and take your fat lazy ass to the food pantry at the Salvation Army. This was the vindictive stream of thought running through Cassie’s slightly stressed and tired mind. Perhaps if Ms. Aretha had called her earlier this morning before she had to deal with a semi-belligerent old man suffering from debilitating dementia she might be in more of a forgiving spirit to go and help out Ms. Aretha. But nah, fuck that. Fuck Kerron and his fat ass, good for nothin’ mammy. Hell, she had a nigga there with her; why the fuck was he not able to help her out? She was the main one talking cash money shit about how to treat a nigga right.

“Ms. Aretha, I need that for myself. Have you ever thought about going to the Salvation Army? I heard also there is a free, 24/7 food pantry down at Peter’s Rock Church in Altgeld Gardens,” Cassie explained in a fake consoling voice. Although there was a part of her that felt bad for the woman, she was getting a kick out of hearing this woman’s suffering.

“I already went down to a pantry. We got a few items. But there’s a lot I can’t eat from there ‘cuz of my diabetes…”

Then the guilt began to hit Cassie. Damn, she didn’t want the woman to go into diabetic shock or some shit. And after all, she was KJ’s grandmother. “Fine, Ms. Aretha. I’m only doing this because you are KJ’s grandmother and I don’t wanna have that guilt on my

shoulders in case something happens to you. All I request is once I give you the card to use, pay the good deed forward. Someone helped me out in my troubles, so now I am helping you out. Can you agree to do that?"

"Yes, what you want me to do?" Aretha asked.

"Anything. See someone on the street, just give them $10. That $10 may be the blessing they need to get through the day. Anyways, I'm at Jewel's right now picking me up a few things. I'll swing over in an hour to give you the card. Ok?"

"Ohmygod, I really appreciate you baby doll! I knew you was a real woman!" Ms. Aretha cried.

Cassie got off the phone. Once she got KJ out of his car seat, the two of them made their way inside the store, picked up a few things and then headed over to Ms. Aretha's house. Cassie got there as she promised about a good hour later. She dialed Ms. Aretha and told her to come outside to get the card. She didn't want to go inside because she had schoolwork to do and she was just too tired to entertain one of Ms. Aretha's drawn-out crazy stories.

"Baby girl, you really came through for me! I really appreciate this!" Aretha said once Cassie rolled down the window and handed her the food stamp card.

"No problem, Ms. Aretha. At the end of the day, I guess we are family, right?"

"Yeah. You know I know we had our differences and I know at the end of the day I wished you and Kerron's relationship worked out, but hey, it is what it is. You still the mother of my cute ass grandbaby!"

Cassie sniggered, "Yeah. Anyways, let me go ahead and head on out. I got some schoolwork to do and my new job is kicking me in the tail."

"Ok, girl! Have a good night!" Aretha said with a huge smile plastered across her face. Cassie rolled up her window and took off down the dusky street. Ms. Aretha still stood there in front of her house watching the car make it down the crowded south side street. The ever-thankful smile she had on her face turned to a vengeful grimace. "Dumb ass bitch. Got her dumb ass…," she growled. The scowl then transformed into a devious Joker-like grin.

Chapter Ten

Spark! Spark!

Tramella, sitting in the plush leather seat of in her freshly cleaned Benz, was parked on the side street at a client's house out in the West side of Chicago. In the passenger seat was one of her employees, Schenay.

She sparked up her lighter and lit her freshly rolled blunt up. Immediately taking in two strong pulls into her chest, she blew the smoke out the window and then passed the blunt to Schenay.

"Nah, I'm good," Schenay quipped.

"Bitch, stop playing. You gon need it. Shit, you know how Mr. Barnes is…," Boss Bitch Auntie Mella sniggered as she bobbed her head to Nicki Minaj's Truffle Butter lowly blaring from her car's speakers.

"Fine," Schenay grumbled and then took the blunt out of Mella's hand. "About that though…Mella, I can't keep doin' this shit. It's too foul. That nasty muhfucka demanded that the next time I come over here he wanted me to make him some booty butter."

"The fuck is booty butter?" Mella asked scrunching her face up.

Schenay lowered her head and shook it in disgust. "Ughh. Just some nasty freak shit."

"Girl, I told you to stop overthinkin' this shit. Just go in there, pop ya pussy, secure the bag and leave. Simple as that," Mella said and took a puff from the blunt.

Mella blew a steady stream of smoke from her nostrils. Her face turned serious and she leaned into Schenay's presence. "God gave you a gift and you need to use it."

"Yeah, but Mella. Fuckin' old niggas? I mean, sure, yeah, I like to fuck. And I don't mind gettin' paid for it, but damn, I'm out here fuckin' niggas old enough to my granddaddy. Old enough to be my great granddaddy?"

"And?!? So what?!? Dick is dick, bitch. At the end of the day, you not poppin' pussy for enjoyment. You poppin' pussy because it's employment." Tramella suddenly grew a bit agitated and snatched the

blunt of Schenay's hand before she could take a hit. She immediately put the blunt out in her ashtray and turned down the music.

"Look, bitch. At the end of the day, you work for me. You and I got a contract. I helped you get that crib out in Bronzeville. I loaned you that twenty-k to for that down payment and to get all that new furniture in yo shit. And let me not remind you I found yo ass at a shelter. That nigga was crackin' yo skull every night. Had it not been for me, yo ass probably would've been laid up in some casket. I'm just tryin' to help you come in the world. In all honesty, you got my nerves agitated right now. Mr. Barnes is about to run me serious cash for this session and you know this. So, I really think you fuckin' with me and my money."

Schenay became a tad mortified sensing Tramella's aggressive and demanding attitude. Tramella's body language reeked 'bitch, I'll fuck you up if you keep playing games with me'. Schenay knew at the end of the day Mella wasn't the type of woman you could just be cavalier about business with, especially when there was a lot at stake. But this underhanded, shady shit they were doing – that was fucking some of their old male clients for money – was getting very disgusting and exploitative for the young "CNA".

Tramella was right though. Schenay did owe her the world. She found her at her lowest low when she escaped an onslaught of daily violence inflicted on her from her fiancée at the time. When she and her five-year-old son managed to escape, she was forced to live in a domestic violence shelter because none of her family nor some of her so-called friends didn't want to take her in. Tramella was a regular volunteer at the shelter and that was how she ended up meeting Schenay. Mella told Schenay all about employment opportunities with Morning Star and how she could help her get back on her feet. Schenay didn't hesitate. Instantly, Tramella helped the woman move into her own townhouse out in Bronzeville. Helped the woman get a new car. Got her enrolled in school to get her bachelor's in elementary education. She even helped to get her fiancée arrested for domestic violence and now he was serving a five-year prison sentence. Schenay was so indebted to Tramella that anything Tramella asked her to do, she did with no qualms…that was until she asked her to start using her body in seductive and sexual ways to help Morning Star bring in more revenue.

Although Morning Star was truly a legit CNA agency, Mella was also using the agency as a cover to help her pimp out some of the women who worked there. It was the perfect scheme and set up because many of the male clients the CNAs interacted with were sitting on either mounds of cash through their retirement income or were getting mad reimbursements from the federal Medicare program.

Schenay was, of course, hesitant at first and even possibly thought about going to the police to tell them about the undercover operation. But the more she thought about it, the more she realized Tramella pretty much had her tied up in so many ways. And to make the situation even worse, she knew that Morning Star's CEO, Mr. Micky, was a dark and nefarious individual and there was no telling what he might do if she ended up going to the police to bring down the agency. So, like some of the other girls who were working on "special" assignments for Tramella, Schenay had to subside her fears and reservation and do what she had to do to keep the ship moving. At first, she was completely terrified but over time she grew numb to everything. But now, with the way Mr. Barnes was demanding her to amp up her freakiness and do shit she wouldn't normally do for the sake of a dollar, Schenay was contemplating once more of just throwing the towel in.

"Tramella, look, all I am saying is, can I just let this be the last time with Mr. Barnes. Maybe get someone else to fuck him? He's just doin' the most."

"Nope. He likes you the most. Look, until you fully pay me back for everything, I'mma need you to just shut the fuck up, put on ya big girl panties and go in there and do what you gotta do. Otherwise, remember, my name is on the mortgage, car note and a few other things. I suggest you act like a mature bitch and realize your financial obligations," Tramella growled. "Anyways, enough of this bullshit. Get the fuck out my car. And come back to the clinic when you get done. I'll run you your cut then."

"Mella, please, just lis—"

"Hoe, you got five seconds to get out of my shit before you end up sleeping at a bus stop," Boss Bitch Mella interjected.

Schenay lowered her head, trying her best to keep herself from crying.

"Come on bitch! I ain't got all day. I got other bitches to check up on! And I gotta shit too! Them jerk tacos fucked my stomach up! LET'S GO!"

"Ok…" Schenay grabbed her purse and made her way out of the car. She took deliberately small and slow steps towards Mr. Barnes' front door. She turned around and saw Tramella gawking at her hard. Tramella waved at her and just like that took off down the street.

Schenay then turned her attention to her maroon Hyundai. For a second she thought about just running towards it, taking off and just saying fuck it to everything. Fuck this shit! Mella could take everything back. If she wanted to. She can do bad all by herself, Schenay thought. But then as she felt the cold and vicious Chicago gusts wrap around her neck and cut through her bones, Schenay knew

deep down in her core she couldn't go back to a shelter. Couldn't fathom the idea of being holed up in some small bunk bed, ripping her only child away from a safe, secure and warm house. Her house. Well, technically not hers – but for right now, for all intents and purposes, it was her house. Schenay thought about her savings. Lately, she had been spending a lot of money; she only had a good $1200 in her bank account. That wasn't nearly enough to suddenly bust a move. Reality set in. Her pussy, unfortunately, had to go clock-in to start its shift.

Schenay rang the doorbell. Moments later the door creaked open. There Mr. Barnes was in his wheelchair looking up at Schenay already licking his lips. He was like the fat white boy that won the golden ticket to get into Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory. Nigga was about to have a field day with that young, sweet, delectable coochie.

"Come on, gal! I know you cold. And I don't want my pusseh cold either. I likes it hot, juicy and bright pink on the inside," he joked.

Schenay strolled in, her gaze lowered. "How you doin' today though, Mr. Barnes?" she nervously laughed, wanting the minimize the routine fuckery that was about to go down.

"...Temperature's rising
And your body's yearnin' for me
So, come here baby
Girl, lay it on me
I place no one above thee
Oh take me to your ecstasy…"

"Ohhh yeah, girl, just like that, keep goin' up and down on that muhfucka." The heavy and erotic groans emanating from Mr. Willie Barnes' dry 82-year-old mouth filled his bedroom, matching the sensual lyrics of Chicago's very own R. Kelly. His beady eyes were closed. His damp tongue loitered on the side of his mouth as a small stream of viscous drool ran down his chin.

"You like that, Mr. Barnes?" Schenay asked, smiling, as she rubbed her bare fat pussy lips up and down Mr. Barnes' growing shaft -- thanks to two ten milligram orange Cialis pills. Schenay was saddled up right on top of Mr. Barnes as he lay in his bed. She gyrated her thick and jiggly brown hips on Mr. Barnes' exposed pelvis, toying with his hardening dick.

"Come on, go on ahead and put it in," Mr. Barnes begged, wanting Schenay to go ahead and slip his dick inside of her tight, juicy cooch.

"No, no, no!" Schenay teasingly replied, placing her finger onto

Mr. Barnes' lips to shush him.

"Oh, you tryin' to play games wit da poosseh," Mr. Barnes lightly growled.

Schenay didn't respond. She just continued to move her hips to the rhythm of Kellz blaring in the background. Mr. Barnes loved listening to some good ass R&B when he was about to get his fuck on.

The old black man leaned forward, grabbed Schenay's right titty and began to suck on it like an infant needing its morning milk. "Goddamn, I loves me a nice titty to suck on," the old Alabama born-and-raised negro mumbled as his tongue twirled around her Ethiopian coffee brown bumpy areola.

Schenay, who just recently turned twenty-four, did her best to keep a smile on her face, but deep down she was disgusted. Her skin crawled as she felt Mr. Barnes' tongue continue to dance around her tender breasts. This was the third time this month she had sex with a man well into his eighties. Aside from fucking Mr. Barnes, she was throwing it back onto two other men – Mr. Whitaker and Mr. Sessions. Out of all of them, Mr. Barnes was the nastiest yet the one with the most money.

Mr. Barnes was widowed decades ago and since then refused to get married again. He was a serial prostitute procurer who thought his life would be much easier and stress-free if he just fucked random women versus dealing with the toils of a long-term relationship.

Besides, at his age, he swore up and down fucking young pussy kept him alive. Mr. Barnes had two strokes some years ago and because he did a bad job managing his diabetes, he had both of his legs amputated. Truth be told though, he really didn't need daily living assistance. He only used the CNA service because the government was paying for it and he figured he'd max out on all he could get. Crazy as it may seem, he actually approached Tramella and asked her if she was looking for a sugar daddy or if she was selling her own damn pussy. Obviously, she told him fuck no, but she offered him the next best alternative – one of her girls. He was more than down for it. For the last two years, Morning Star on paper was Mr. Barnes' designated home health aide service, but also his liaison for fresh black pussy.

Schenay hoisted herself off Mr. Barnes' hips and turned around. Now on her knees, she tooted her ass in the air and backed up into Mr. Barnes' face. "I did as you requested. I didn't wipe my ass or take a shower for two days."

"Oh shit," Mr. Barnes groaned. "Fresh booty butter. Let me get a whiff of it."

Following his command, Schenay comfortably sat her unwiped, unwashed ass and partly-soppy pussy meat on top of Mr. Barnes' face

so he could dig his wide nigga nose deep into the crevices of her cheeks. Running his nose up and down her crack, he took in the aromatic melange of pussy juice, partly crusted booboo, urine and a mix of other odors that ironically was arousing to the perverted senior citizen. Mr. Barnes got the idea from watching all of this ass fetish porno flicks starring his favorite, Brian Pumper.

As Schenay continued to cautiously sit and gyrate on Mr. Barnes' face, he continued to smell and lick her insides. Schenay was just counting down the minutes in her head until she was done. She glanced down and saw the obvious evidence that the Cialis pills were working wonders on Mr. Barnes' heavy, girthy dick. Old nigga had a tusk between his legs. In any other situation, Schenay herself would've been thoroughly thrilled with the sight of the monstrous dick. She loved big meat. But having to put 'old' meat inside of her was just absolutely disgusting. She huffed and rolled her eyes, still feeling the tip of Mr. Barnes' tongue and nose between her cheeks. Hurry up old nigga, she thought to herself.

Mr. Barnes pulled his face out of Schenay's ass and slapped her right cheek. "Come on now, come ride the dick," he commanded. Following his instructions, Schenay proceeded to migrate her way down to Mr. Barnes' pelvis. She sat upright, in reverse cowgirl position. She lifted her bottom up and grabbed Mr. Barnes' rod with her right hand. She closed her eyes, took a gulp and inserted the meat inside of her. She was wet earlier, but her puss was now a bit dry. She took the meat out, tilted her head down and drooled down to Mr. Barnes' dick tip. Saliva -- the world's first lubricant. She moistened up the meat and proceeded to slip it back inside of her. A tad better. She closed her eyes once more and envisioned not the 82-year-old man, but Idris Elba. It was the perfect imagery needed to at least partly enjoy the experience.

"Ahhh, shit, you ain't like the rest of 'em. You got some good ass pussy," Mr. Barnes commented as he slipped out a groan. Schenay's walls conformed to the dick and she immediately went to work, taking in the meat, hopping up and down to make this old nigga nut within two minutes...hopefully. Sometimes old niggas had a way of lasting in the puss.

"Ahh, fuck, yeah, don't stop, grip the dick, bitch. Grip it!" Mr. Barnes let out a loud growl, holding firmly onto Schenay's waist as she jumped on the dick up and down, creaming all over his shaft.

"Damn, you cummin', you like the dick, don't you?" Old Man Barnes sniggered as she threw a slap across her jiggly ass.

"Hell yeah, it's good baby," Schenay somewhat lied.

As Schenay continued to work the geriatric peen, nausea entered her stomach. "You cummin' yet, bae?" she asked.

Barnes didn't respond, he just continued to let out pants through his whiskey-reeked mouth.

A few moments later, the strokes amped up, Mr. Barnes tightened his grip around her waist and dug faster and deeper into Schenay.

"AHH! AHHH"! Mr. Barnes growled.

"Finally…" Schenay thought as she felt Mr. Barnes' hands slip off her waist. Crazy thing was she didn't feel any semen shoot inside of her. But within seconds, Mr. Barnes began to let out a weird gurgling and choking sound. At first, Schenay didn't pay any attention to it. She just thought the old man was recovering from the orgasm. Schenay sat up and turned around and saw Mr. Barnes clasping his chest, trying his hardest to take in oxygen into his lungs.

It took Schenay a moment to realize what was going on, but suddenly her medical knowledge kicked in. Was he having a heart attack?!? Schenay scrunched her slightly sweaty face. "Mr. Barnes, you alright, what's wrong?" Bitch, he's dying! Suddenly her intuition slapped her into reality. This old dude was having some sort of cardiac event.

"Oh my god! Mr. Barnes! Mr. Barnes! Are you ok?!?" Schenay lunged at the man, staring into his pained face. His eyes were popped wide open, pupils staring directly into the slowly spinning bedroom ceiling fan.

"Oh my god!" Schenay quickly scanned the room, trying to assess what she was going to do next. Should she call someone? Call 9-11? Think quick, bitch!

She scuttled her naked body out of the bed and grabbed her cell phone off the dresser over in the corner of the room. She then dashed back over to Mr. Barnes and in the twinkling of an eye, it was apparent his struggle for life was no more. His arms were spread out. His mouth hung open. Entire body now motionless.

"What the fuck?!?" the young hoe shrieked and she scanned Mr. Barnes. She threw two fingers to the side of the man's neck to check for a pulse. No pulse. She looked at his chest. No rising. He wasn't breathing. Was he dead? She looked down at her phone, unlocked it and immediately dialed 9-11.

"9-11, what's your emergency?"

"Umm, yes, I, umm…"

"Yes, hello? Is everything alright, ma'am?"

Schenay went silent. She then immediately hung up the phone. "Fuck that," she said to herself. She scanned the semi-dark bedroom and looked for her clothes. She threw her outfit on, grabbed her belongings and then quickly tidied up the room. She didn't want to leave any overwhelming evidence that something nefarious went down. Get the money, where's the money? That quick thought made

her immediately realize getting her coins was more important than Mr. Barnes' welfare. Aside from the cut Tramella would give her, Mr. Barnes would always slip her something a little extra on the side. At the end of the day, he wanted to keep her happy and docile enough to keep coming back. He'd usually slip her an extra $200 for her troubles. She dashed over to his dresser and saw his fat, cash-stuffed wallet. She emptied out all of the hundred dollar bills in the wallet into her purse, threw the wallet back onto the top of the dresser and dashed out of his apartment.

"Fuck that shit!" She'd be damned if she was going to get caught the fuck up. She made her way to her Hyundai parked on the side street, looked around, paranoid hoping someone did notice herself on the relatively quiet Garfield Park street. Chucking up the engine, she didn't hesitate to throw the car into drive and zip down the street.

Once she hit a major intersection, she pulled out her phone called Mella.

"Damn, bitch, that was quick!" Mella uttered without evening bothering to say hello or at least give the girl a good afternoon.

"MELLA! I think Mr. Barnes is dead!"

"Whatchu mean you think he's dead? What happened?!?!"

"Girl, we was fuckin' and then he just spazzed the fuck out! I got up off him and I checked his vitals. He ain't have no pulse! I had to leave!"

"YOU DUMB ASS BITCH! WHY THE FUCK DID YOU LEAVE?!?!? WHY DIDN'T YOU CALL ME!"

As Schenay sped down the street she couldn't come up with a good enough answer. She wanted to cry. Damn, Mella was right though. Schenay should've called her so at least she could've given the girl vital instructions to possible save face on the situation.

"GOSH! BITCH, YOU MUST BE FUCKIN' RETARDED! DID YOU AT LEAST CLEAN UP?!?!? WHAT IF HIS SON COMES OVER!?!! THEY GON KNOWN WE EITHER DIDN'T SHOW UP OR SOMETHIN' HAPPENED! BITCH, BRING YO ASS STRAIGHT TO THE OFFICE NOW!" Tramella hung up. Didn't even let Schenay get a word of explanation in.

As she continued speeding down the busy street, making her way to the expressway to head to the Southside, Schenay bawled a sea of tears. She knew she fucked up and Mella was going to make her pay in a way or ways she couldn't even fathom.

Chapter Eleven

Tramella's Benz sped into the parking lot of Morning Star like an angry bat out of hell. Despite it being damn near negative twenty degrees outside, fiery hellish anger overtook her; she was ready to fuck some shit up, if not outright kill someone. Once the boss bitch got out of her car, she ferociously stormed through the front doors of Morning Star. She threw her cutting eyes at Maria. "Maria, get cho shit and go home for the rest of the day. Also, turn off the phone lines."

Maria was caught off by surprise but could sense something serious than a heart attack was going on.

"Hey, boss lady? What's going on?" Maria asked looking concerned.

"Bitch, just do what I told you to do? Where the fuck is Schenay at?"

"Damn, alrighty then…She's in the in training room…I guess waiting for you,"

"Good then. See you tomorrow."

Maria raised her brow in suspicion as Tramella walked off. She didn't want to rock the boat. Although the receptionist wasn't aware of how Tramella truly got down, she always knew her manager was a shady bitch who did questionable things. But it wasn't any of her business. So long as she was collecting her paycheck every week and no one really fucked with her she was good. She turned off the phone lines. If anyone called in they were going to be sent straight to Morning Star's voice mail. Maria grabbed her purse, cell phone, and keys and threw up the deuces as she made her way out the door.

Mella, viciously walking down the corridor, finally made her way to the training room where she knew Schenay was at. Since most of the CNAs worked in the field and were on site at different nursing homes or assisted living facilities, only a handful of people actually worked in Morning Star's office. Mella told Micky what happened although he wasn't in the office today. The only people present in were Mella and Schenay, and that was exactly how Mella wanted it.

Schenay, sitting scared at a desk, jumped at the sound of Tramella barging in. She clutched her mouth and her eyes widened in fear. “Mella, look girl, I’m so sorry!”

“Bitch, shut up! You know…” Mella lowered her head, tightened her mouth and balled up her fists. “You know, you really out of pocket this time. You gon’ get us in fuckin’ trouble. You know why?”

Tears began to swell in Schenay’s eyes. She didn’t answer Mella as she was on the verge of breaking down.

“ASK ME WHY BITCH!” Mella screamed, her voice damn near cracking the walls inside the training room.

“Why?” Schenay replied with her eyes closed, a tear escaping her eye.

“Mr. Barnes is still fuckin’ alive. His son came home an hour later and discovered him. First thing he did was call me and ask me why no one wasn’t there to tend to him. I had to fuckin’ lie and make up some shit.”

“Well, is he gon’ be okay?”

“He’s in a fuckin’ coma right now. But if he wakes up and gets to talkin’ about everything, we are ALL going down. And I’d be damned if I’m gonna let that happen. So I got a plan.”

“What’s that?” Schenay nervously asked.

“Bitch, don’t worry about it. But for right now, I gotta teach you a fuckin’ lesson. When you fuck with my money and my brand, muthafuckas gotta pay.”

Mella then lunged at the girl, catching her by surprise. Without hesitation, she gripped her by the neck and snatched her out of her chair.

“MELLA! NO, PLEASE DON’T HUR-“

Before Schenay could let out a cry to stop her boss from physically harming her, let alone ask for help, Mella began throwing punch after punch into the girl’s face. Mella at her core was a straight up street nigga, learning how to fight and throw down in the wicked streets of the Chi. Important survival skills. Although Schenay tried her best to resist the blows, throwing up her hands, screaming uncontrollably, kicking all over the place, Mella overpowered the defenseless woman.

“YOU DUMB ASS RETARDED BITCH! FUCKIN’ WITH MY BAG! FUCK WAS YOU THINKIN’?!?” Mella yelled as she then stood up and began viciously kicking and stomping Schenay all over her frame.

There was just simply no way in the hell Schenay was going to escape this brutality. Mella was without a doubt taller, bigger and more muscular. Although she hadn’t played ball in years, she was very much still in shape, going to the gym four to five times a week, hitting the weights with niggas who were benching more than 400. And unfortunately, Schenay was reaping was feeling just how brutish and

monstrously strong Boss Bitch Mella was.

As the attack went on for another three or four minutes, Schenay was damn near on the verge of unconsciousness. She laid there on the training room's floor, blood leaking from her mouth and nose. From the bottom of her chest down to her pelvis felt like someone ran over it. The defenseless, irresponsible hoe could barely move as she also sensed possibly Tramella had broken one of her ribs. Mella hawked up the biggest ball of spit in her mouth and then lunged it at the girl's face as she lay there still reeling in terror and pain.

"Now, get the fuck up, get yourself cleaned up and be ready to report back here tomorrow. You owe me your life now, hoe. You work for me forever. You ain't goin' nowhere. Try and run to tell someone, I'm killin' you and that ugly ass autistic son of yours," Mella growled as she leaned down into Schenay's face, proud of the violence she inflicted upon her employee. "Oh and find a babysitter. You gon eat my pussy tonight."

"O—o-ok," Schenay mumbled. If it wasn't for her son, the poor girl just would've ended her life tonight. But knowing she couldn't leave her son alone in this cold, unforgiving world, she acquiesced to Mella, now realizing more than ever she was indefinitely enslaved to the woman.

Chapter Twelve

Knock. Knock. "Vontavis, open up," Mella screeched as she kept pounding on her son's bedroom door. Moments later, the bedroom door opened and Vontavis stood there with his head cocked to his side. His room was smoky; a Tekashi69 mixtape was rumbling in the background. Mella peered into the room and could see Vontavis had some young, sexy dark-skinned chick up his room.

Mella rolled her neck and said, "Now, you already know how I feel about you bringing young bitches over to my mothafuckin' house, right?"

"Mama, come on now. As much shit I do for you and Micky, you mean to tell me I can't bring none of my peoples over?"

Mella rolled her eyes. "You right. Speaking of doing shit for me, let me holla at you in my room for a second."

"What's it about?"

"Come on, let's just talk for a sec…"

"Ok," Vontavis mumbled. He turned his attention towards his lady friend and said, "Ay, I'll be right back. I'mma go holla at my old lady for a second."

"Alright," the young bitch replied as she took a toke from the blunt, bobbing her head to Tekashi.

Mella and Vontavis walked into her room and Mella quickly shut the door. "What's going on?" Vontavis asked, his eyes turned to inquisitive slits.

"So, Schenay's dumb ass made one of my clients, Mr. Barnes, have a heart attack. She left out the fuckin' house and didn't bother to call anyone. His son found him sometime later. For some odd reason or another, the old mothafucka is still alive and in a coma. If his ass wakes up he's gonna start runnin' his mouth. I just know it," Mella explained.

"I told you to stop fucking with that shit, mama. Me and Micky been told you that! You not even making serious bread doin' that shit. What the fuck, bruh?"

"Boy, watch who the fuck you talkin' down to like that. I know

what the fuck I got myself into. I know what the fuck I'm doin'. I don't need you nor Micky's fat ass trying to tell me how to run MY business. Anyways, since you seemed to forget that you still my son and you work for ME, I need you to go back in your room and tell that young bitch to leave 'cuz you got work to do!"

Vontavis smacked his teeth. "Man, come on. Why it gotta be done now? And what the fuck I gotta do? That old ass nigga is pretty much on his deathbed. He can't even speak. How you know he gon even wake the fuck up?"

"VONTAVIS! I don't have time to sit back and think about this shit. This shit needs to happen ASAP!"

Vontavis lowered and shook his head. He went silent for a moment and then looked at his mother; those sexy, young eyes still in curious slits. "So what you need to me do?" he asked.

Mella handed Vontavis a small black zippable case.

Vontavis glanced down at the case and asked with a scrunched up face, "What's that?"

"Fentanyl. I talked to Mr. Barnes' son. He's down at an ICU on life support, but the doctors

are saying there are good chances he's going to wake up. I'mma need you to go and run this shot up in him. The entire bottle."

Vontavis proceeded to open up the case and gawked at a fresh syringe and a small unmarked bottle. Fentanyl was a prescription opioid currently hot on the streets. It a potent drug that a lot of heroin users were finding themselves addicted to. Unlike heroin, Fentanyl could easily kill with a small dosage. Tramella wanted her son to kill the man by running the entire bottle into his system.

"Wait, how in the fuck you want me to do this? You just want me to walk into the hospital like I know this old muhfucka and then inject him with this shit? Mama, you've lost your mothafuckin' mind! Yeah, I've ruffed up a few niggas for ya'll, but this shit right here, murder. Man, what the fuck! Why can't you or Micky get one of the guys from the set to do this shit?!?!? You want your own son to go down and kill a man and possibly get in trouble for this shit?!?! Hell no! Fuck that! You got me ALL the way fucked up!"

SLAP!

Tramella's hand went across Vontavis' face. He clutched the side his face, standing there shocked, staring at his mother.

"All that I've done for you. All the shit I bought you and still buy you?!? Nigga, you must've forgot how much you owe me. As many times as you use to give me hell, running in the streets, doing dumb shit. This is the least thing you could do. Besides, Mr. Barnes' ass is damn near dead already. He's already lived a full fuckin' life. Anyways, ENOUGH of the bullshit Vontavis. Handle this ASAP or else

you need to get the fuck up my house and find somewhere else to live." Tramella leaned into her son's face, "Besides, you want me to tell Micky you and your boys ran a train on Shandalyn?" Mella was referring to Micky's daughter. Mella, one day being nosy, went through her son's phone and saw video footage of him a group of his guys running a full-on train on Shandalyn. Although Vontavis and Micky were cool, Vontavis knew that if Micky found out he fucked his daughter, let alone, he and his guys ran a train on her (mind you, she was only sixteen at the time), Micky would have him killed.

Vontavis, now agitated, trembling, and almost ready to attack his own damn mother, tried his best to contain his fury. "Fine. Don't ask me to do some crazy shit like this again. What hospital he at?"

"University of Chicago…"

"How much you gon give me for this?"

"Maybe ten stacks. We'll talk about it when you get back, ok?"

"Fine."

Mella smiled. "Love you, son."

"Yeah, love you too, ma," he lied with a fake, pretentious smile on his face. He walked off grumbling indiscernibly under his breath.

Once he got back into his room, he looked at his girl.

"Aye, time to go. I got some shit to do. I'll holla at ya later."

"Damn, baby. You had me come all the way up north and you can't even give me no dick?" the attractive dark-skinned girl mumbled. She was higher than Charlie Sheen at a Hollywood orgy.

"I'll swing by your crib and pick you up later," Vontavis sexily growled. "I'll make it up to you, I promise."

Chapter Thirteen

Vontavis coolly strolled through University of Chicago's ICU floor looking for the receptionist or a nurse to speak with. He wanted to know the exact room Mr. Barnes was in. As he took his time trying to locate the receptionist' area, he just wondered if he was truly making the right decision.

Murder. This was something that up until this point he didn't even think he'd be capable of doing. Granted, he was a goon and loved from time to time to do rough niggas up at the request of Tramella or Micky. But this shit right here…Killing an old man who might possibly snitch after getting some pussy; nah, this was a bit out of his purview.

As Vontavis continued to scan the cold and quiet ICU floor, all he could hear were soft cries, coughs among the backdrop of ventilators and EKG machines. The more he took steps through the bright floor, the more he contemplated if he should just spin on his feet, walk out and then say fuck it to everything. His dad was all the way back in North Carolina, and just maybe he could call him up and just flee there. But then he thought about Shandalyn and how that one crazy night was now being used as leverage by his mother to get anything she wanted out of him.

Finally, Vontavis spotted the nurse's station. Suddenly his scowl turned into a smile as he approached this bubbly fat blonde nurse sitting behind the counter. "Excuse me, ma'am. I'm here to visit my great uncle. Mr. William Barnes. Do you know what room he in?" Vontavis asked.

"Yessir, he's in room 1404. Just keep going down, make a right and he's in the third room. His son just left not too long ago."

"Thank you," he responded and then proceeded to make his way down the icy corridor, the brightness of the light emanating from above damn near blinding his. But the blinding was a bit revelatory, making him ponder deeply the decision he was about to make.

He took a deep breath and finally came to the room. He strolled in and saw Mr. Barnes laid up in the bed, motionless, so many tubes running in and out of his body.

This is bullshit, Vontavis thought to himself. But with time at hand, no telling who was going to come into the room, he needed to work expeditiously. He got closer to Mr. Barnes and scanned him up and down, taking in the man's frailty, even noticing his missing legs. "Damn," Vontavis grumbled and shook his head.

Trying his best to subside his guilty conscience, he opened the black case, pulled out the syringe and the bottle Fentanyl. He unwrapped the syringe and stuck the needle into the bottle. For a second he thought how he was going to inject the dope, but as he took in the man's appearance once more, he couldn't help but think how Mr. Barnes eerily resembled his own grandfather. And although he hadn't seen the man in years, he couldn't in good faith just off the man who probably had his own kids and grandchildren. Although he should've never got caught up with Tramella, Vontavis thought the man didn't deserve to go out like this.

Suddenly a flash of that night with Shandalyn ran through his mind. He took a deep breath and ran the needle against Mr. Barnes' neck. The carotid artery. One of the biggest in the body. In one swift injection, the man was going to be surely dead within twenty minutes.

Chapter Fourteen

The second Vontavis was inside his car parked in the University of Chicago Hospital's parking lot, he grabbed a small trash bag he had in his car and tossed the case with the fatal dose of fentanyl along with the used syringe into the bag. His heart felt like it was pounding out of his chest and his forehead was dripping with sweat.

Vontavis debated on throwing it away in the hospital but decided it was best to get rid of it elsewhere. His head was all fucked up. He'd stomped many muthafuckas in his short life, but he'd never been on no murdering type shit. *Now, look at the mess my own mama got me in*. I'ma burn this shit when I get to the house, Vontavis thought quickly.

His head fell back grazing the headrest and he let out a blood-curdling scream that started from the tips of his toes and ripped through his entire body. He was gripping the steering wheel so hard his hands ached. Vontavis couldn't believe his mother had actually forced him to cross the line from just being an occasional menace, to a bonafide, cold-blooded killer. Vontavis cranked up the car and carefully peeled out of the parking garage. The last thing he wanted to do was raise any suspicion. He knew there had to be a ton of security cameras in the parking garage.

Vontavis's mind was reeling as he eased down the street. Nah, mama or not, ain't nobody holding shit over my head like this again. He'd killed a man to keep Tramella and Schenay's name clear, who the fuck was going to do the same for him? It damn sure wasn't his sorry ass mama.

I can't even believe I did that shit, he thought to himself. Vontavis looked down at his phone and saw Tramella was already blowing his phone up. He'd already ignored two calls. Damn bitch, can a nigga commit murder in peace? Let me go ahead and see what this bitch wants. Vontavis had long ago thrown any motherly inclinations towards Tramella out the window. Today's request just sealed the deal in his mind and heart. What kind of real mother asked her child to do the type of things she did?

"Yeah?"

“Nigga, what the hell is taking you so long to answer the damn phone? You see me calling you. Is it done?”

“Hell yeah, it’s done. What did you want me to do? Put the phone to my ear and talk to you while I’m doing it? Facetime you?” Vontavis damn near growled through the phone. “I just left. Call up there now or go up there and check. I’m sure they’ll tell you he’s gone to glory. Bye,” he said hanging up.

Vontavis added the glory part in out of guilt. Shit, he hoped to make it to heaven when he died. But with all the bullshit Tramella got him in these days, it’s highly unlikely. Yeah, he knew Mr. Barnes was in that house fuckin’ every young hoe he could. So what?

Vontavis had heard stories of how the man was an old freak but damn? What man wouldn’t be? The muthafucka was old as hell and didn’t have any legs. Nigga had to get it how he lived it. He didn’t deserve to go out like that though. *At least not by my hands* Vontavis thought to himself. *I need to figure some shit out for myself, a nigga can’t keep this up much longer* he thought pulling into Chrishanna’s apartment complex. She was one of the hoes he fucked with on the regular. Part-time pussy. Vontavis knew this was just the spot to come fuck, smoke some bomb ass weed and get his head together. Plus he owed her a proper dick down from earlier when she was at the house and he had to put her out…so he could go kill someone. Damn.

An hour later Vontavis was knee-deep in Chrishanna’s tight, wet pussy.

“Oooooh yes, daddy! Oh my god!” the young hoe cried out.

“You like that shit, don’t you?” Vontavis howled, completely zoning out and going wild on the pussy. He had to take his frustrations out on someone and it looked like tonight Chrishanna’s pussy was about to pay the price. Vontavis’ ten inches were all in this girl’s guts but the only visions in his mind were of him putting a needle in an innocent old man’s neck and causing his death.

“Oooh yes, baby! You killin’ this pussy! You murderin’ this pussy daddy!” she shouted.

What the fuck? Vontavis hurried up and pulled his dick out so fast it slapped against his rippled abdomen.

“What the fuck did you say about killing? Who killed someone?” Vontavis asked becoming immediately paranoid. His eyes darted around the shabby looking bedroom nervously.

“Come on Vontavis, don’t stop! Nigga, I said you killin’ this pussy.”

Vontavis frowned already out the mood. He reached down and pulled the sloppy wet condom off his now semi-hard dick. His mood

was too blown to continue. *Imagine that? Got me nervous as hell over here,* he thought reaching for his clothes.

"Look I just remembered something I gotta do. I'ma get with you later. Maybe I'll pull up later tonight," Vontavis said quickly throwing his clothes back on.

Chrishanna sat on the bed with her lips stuck out. She was just about to come all over his fat dick too. She was on the verge of cussing him out for wasting her goddamn time but held her tongue. At least he promised to come back. She'd been trying to capture the young, handsome thug's attention for weeks now but Vontavis was very casual in his dealings with her. Always calling at the last minute. Maybe I'll fry up some chicken for later? We can break bread when he comes through tonight she thought. She couldn't take her eyes off his muscular, tattooed frame. The day she'd met him walking out of the corner store she'd thought she'd hit the lotto. Yeah, that's exactly what I'm gon' do. Niggas will come back again and again if they know your ass can cook! she plotted with a big smile across her face.

"Okay, I'm out," Vontavis said and with that, he was out the door.

An hour later Vontavis was in his bedroom smoking the joint he'd been too spooked to spark up earlier. *Bitch talking about killin' something? A nigga ain't trying to hear that shit right now!* He thought almost laughing to himself.

Suddenly there was a loud knock at his bedroom door.

He walked over and quickly swung it open to find his mother Tramella standing there with a cigarette dangling from her blackened lips. At the sight of him, her lips curled into a joker like smile.

"Hey, son! Aww shit! Smells like you smoking on some of that good shit up in here I see. Let me get a puff of that," Tramella said quickly switching out her cigarette for several puffs of the potent loud filling the air. Vontavis quickly cut his eyes at her. Any other time she was complaining his favorite strain of weed was "funking up her goddamn house" now all he saw was her 90's style gold tooth because she couldn't shut her mouth she was smiling so hard.

"I just wanted to touch base with you. That ol' nigga is gone. Crisis muthafuckin' averted and it's all thanks to you. You know son, I don't know if I tell you enough how much I appreciate the things you do, Vontavis. I don't know what I would have done had you been born a girl. The Lord knew what I needed. You were born to do this shit, a muthafuckin' natural! A born monster!" Tramella said clapping her hands and raising them to the ceiling.

Bitch had I been a girl you wouldn't have done shit but sell my pussy to

the highest bidder, Vontavis thought bitterly.

"So we're right back in business," Tramella gloated.

"Why though? Mickey told you a long time ago to leave that shit alone. It doesn't even bring in enough money to make it worth taking all the risks of someone finding out."

Tramella pressed her otherwise full lips into thin lines and cut her eyes at Vontavis.

"Now see nigga, this is where you overstep your damn boundaries with me. Now I'm in a good fuckin' mood after stressing about this shit all goddamn day. Don't fuck it up, nigga. Just do what the fuck I say do! Ain't you livin' good? I don't see your ass wanting for nothing now do I? Eating good lobster, steak and jumbo shrimp! Nigga you shop when you want, what's the goddamn problem nigga?" Vontavis sat back in the recliner in his bedroom and grabbed the remote control to his PlayStation.

Tramella huffed as her eyes turned into scornful slits. "Yeah, that's right. Sit in that goddamn chair and play video games like the little ass boy you are. Instead of questioning me about shit. I run thangs around here! Ain't like you're taking any initiative. Now I came in here with good vibrations and intentions and shit," Tramella spat. She then lunged a small black duffle bag she'd been holding the entire conversation toward him. "Here," she barked.

Vontavis threw his remote down just in time to catch it and avoid being hit in the head.

"BYE NIGGA!" Tramella shouted slamming out of the room.

Vontavis peeled open the bag and quickly counted out ten thousand dollars. *Shit, I guess that's all a person's life is worth to my mama. I better keep that shit in mind, if the bitch ever tries to off me, I know this is all she thinks I'm worth*, Vontavis thought tossing the bag aside and going back to his game. He couldn't even concentrate though. Vontavis needed options.

I can't stay in this bullshit, he thought. Vontavis rose from the recliner and walked over to his bookshelf pulling out the thick envelope full of his most prized documents. Vontavis had long ago hidden it from any prying eyes. It was the Bachelor of Computer Science degree he'd earned from Devry University. He was now two months away from earning his master's degree and now here he was stressed the fuck out with this bullshit. He'd managed to get himself an education despite his mother's lack of support. For the most part, all in his bedroom while she thought he was merely in here playing video games and smoking weed. Included in the stack of papers was his father's phone number and address. Maybe I need to see about just leaving Chicago and going down south? Starting over away from Tramella's bullshit. The problem was Vontavis hadn't seen his father

in years. He'd spent a few years living with his dad back in the day and recalled those being the happiest years of his childhood. It was like Tramella hated the thought of her own child doing good and being happy. It was apparent she loved talking to him like he was a dog and incapable of doing anything outside of her bidding. Every time he spoke with her about bettering himself and possibly enrolling in some college classes, the idea was shot down. Fortunately for him, years ago he'd gotten to the point where he no longer sought her approval. It was clear she didn't want better for him. So he chose to want better for himself. The same way Tramella was using her son. He was using his mother.

"What does a big, black nigga like you look like going to college? That's a waste of good muscle! Hell, I can make sure you make more money than a college degree will ever get you. Look how I'm living. Nah nigga, trust me. Mama knows best! I went to college and played ball. You gon' still have to get it out the mud out here in these streets. You don't need no damn college." Those were his own mother's thoughts about him. Any bit of happiness he felt in this "home" over the years was fleeting. He'd been used to do Tramella's dirty work since he was sixteen years old. It was time for shit to change. Tramella was truly trying to turn him into a monster. Now that he'd killed a man, when was that shit going to stop? He just knew this was going to be the beginning. He needed to get the fuck out of this house and clear his head. He quickly ran the possibility of going back to Chrishanna's house. He just didn't want her getting used to seeing him around.

Chapter Fifteen

No, ma'am, the money is good but this is not what the hell I signed up for, Cassie thought lugging the hamper full of shitty sheets she'd just pulled off Mrs. Lewis's bed down to her basement laundry room.

Yeah, the old lady was nice as can be, she was apologetic as hell about having shit the bed, but that was beside the damn point. Cassie was already past the point of disillusionment with her CNA aspirations. It had only been six months and already, it was time to move on to bigger and better things.

Yes, the checks were nice and Tramella lived up to her promises in regard to being able to quickly reach a few financial aspirations, but Cassie could not see herself doing this much longer. *I'm over grown people pissin' and shittin' the bed!* Cassie thought ruefully.

Don't get it twisted, Cassie was forever grateful for the opportunities working at Morning Star provided. The new job had come right on time, but now that she was in her first semester of college and had made up her mind to obtain a nursing degree, Cassie was ready to move on from all the back-breaking CNA grunt work.

Cassie was already plotting on how she could start being a full-time student and possibly obtain her degree early. It hadn't taken long for Cassie to discover that CNA job responsibilities are vastly different from being a nurse. Every day she went into work, the thought, "No bitch you are NOT a nurse!" swam in her head. You're merely doing the bullshit real nurses don't want to do! Cassie was tired of coming in and out of various homes. Driving all over the city of Chicago and neighboring suburbs was for the fucking birds she concluded. The company paid mileage but it wasn't shit. Not to mention, in a few months, the wear and tear on her new car was about to make it just as shitty as her old ride if she kept driving all over the place.

Then, as far as cleanliness of patients' homes, some were clean environments, most were sub-par. Cassie for one couldn't believe the conditions some adult children let their aging parents live in. It was downright elder abuse. The majority of her clients were senior citizens but there was the occasional young client who needed services thrown

in. It was good when she had steady clients but, in this field, you could have a client one day, and they were dead the next! Cassie had quickly realized it was best not to become attached to her clients the way she had one of her first assignments, Ms. Rose. The day she'd passed, Cassie had cried and boo-hooed as if her own grandmother had died.

Cassie loaded everything into the washing machine in the basement and walked back upstairs to scrub and sanitize her arms all the way up to her elbows. She couldn't wait to pick up KJ and run home to get in the shower which was her daily routine. She was happy to see her relief Carla was already there and getting comfortable for the evening.

Mrs. Lewis pretty much had 24-hour care in her home. After going over the events of the day with Carla, Cassie walked outside and jumped into her car. She almost felt ashamed at how ungrateful she'd sounded to her own ears only moments before. But shit, didn't everyone curse their job about an hour before it was time to get off and then get a whole new attitude once they were off the clock?

When she'd started she truly did have CNA dreams and they'd all come to fruition. The last six months had been damn good to Cassie. KJ was cute as hell, even though he did look exactly like his no-good daddy. Her baby was thriving in every way. KJ was now eight months old and attended the state-of-the-art daycare facility that was right in the same strip mall as the main offices of Morning Star. A mere three months after working, Cassie had been able to secure a car loan all on her own which allowed her to push a brand-new Infiniti G37. Exactly two months later, with the help of Tramella, Cassie and KJ were able to move into a townhome. It was nowhere near the level of where Tramella lived but it was a beautiful three-bedroom home in Kenwood, a safe neighborhood on the South Side. The townhouse came with a small backyard for her son to play in when he got older. Cassie was already considering home ownership in the next two years. Life truly was good.

Even better, the relationship with her parents had been restored and they were her backbone in the early days as she strived to turn her life around. Cassie's father, though he'd been against her having KJ, was a loving, doting grandfather. That made Cassie the happiest because Kerron was still sitting in jail awaiting trial. It had been hard at first ignoring Kerron. His mother Aretha didn't make it any better, but Cassie had stuck to her guns in regard to cutting ties with Kerron. Cassie let Aretha know that she was in favor of her having a relationship with KJ, but if she continued bringing up Kerron she was going to have to sever all ties. Aretha quickly acquiesced in order to keep seeing her grandson.

Cassie breezed into Morning Star Kids Inc. to pick up KJ. After safely snapping him into his seat, she sat in the car and sent Tramella a text.

Cassie: "Hey Auntie! Do you think we could sit down and talk? I have a few things on my mind and I need to hash them out with someone whose opinion I can rely on and you know that's you! ~ Cassie

Mella: "Baby you know I'm always here for my girls. Come on by the house. I'm cooking. Make sure you have lil man with you too!" ~ Auntie Mella

Chapter Sixteen

Cassie smiled reading Tramella's response to her text message. She was always there when she needed an ear. But Cassie soon found out she would dig in your ass too. At first, it was off-putting. After all, Mella was not REALLY Cassie's auntie, but she always had to step back and appreciate how hard Tramella went for those she considered family because it was always in your best interest. When Cassie told Tramella about how Aretha had called and guilted her into letting her use her food stamp card, Tramella hit the roof. Cassie literally had to talk her down because Tramella wanted Aretha's phone number and everything. Tramella said she hated to see a broke down bitch trying to take advantage of people who were in need. Tramella told her she wanted to "pull-up on that bitch" however Cassie was livid. She certainly hadn't expected that kind of a reaction from Tramella.

Cassie didn't give Tramella the information but ever since then, she hadn't let Aretha use the card even though she'd damn sure called trying to get it. Honestly, it just sat in the drawer untouched except the one time she allowed Aretha to use it. She was making more than enough money to take care of her and KJ's needs and then some. Her medical benefits had kicked in after ninety days of being on the job and Cassie never looked back. That humiliating experience that day at Walmart never left her mind. She never wanted to have to pull out an EBT card again. It was a blessing while she needed it, Cassie couldn't dispute that fact. But she was officially back on her feet.

By the time Cassie walked into the house and got KJ bathed and dressed he was out like a light. The lavender baby wash she used always knocked him out. Cassie jumped in the shower to get herself together. Cassie wasn't lying when she'd said she was going to stay in a pair of scrubs. She took every bit of overtime she could get and her closet and new material possessions showed it. She'd gone over a year without being able to really treat herself, so when things started falling into place for her, oh you better believe a bitch like Cassie Pierce forgot all about the Goodwill. Cassie stood in her full-length mirror for a few minutes. Damn, she had to admit she still looked

good. Cassie had a few slight stretch marks on the lower part of her stomach from having KJ, but other than that, she thought she looked damn good for a new mama. *Shit, if a nigga can find fault, that just means he's looking too damn hard!* Cassie thought. KJ had even plumped her little booty up. *Bitch all you're missing right now is a good man*, Cassie thought to herself.

Cassie slid on a little dress she'd ordered from Boo-hoo.com She loved shopping at all the little online fashion boutiques. She could get cute items without breaking the bank. Yeah, she wasn't stuck with Goodwill anymore but she did try to stay conservative with her money when she could. She wasn't going to soon forget her time spent struggling to survive when she was with Kerron.

Thirty minutes later Cassie was sitting around Tramella's dining table sipping on a nice chilled bottle of Moscato. KJ was rolling around the kitchen in a walker Tramella had bought for him to keep at her house. Tramella really loved her son and treated them both like family.

Tramella's glass was turned up to her lips but she was looking at Cassie with her lips turned down.

"Damn Cassie! Girl, you have only been on the job six months! How the fuck you tired of the job this damn fast? You just made it to the top of struggling hill, now you trying to go back down again? Look, I don't mean any harm but you know I keep it real baby girl! I've been sitting here biting my tongue, but I'ma gon' head and tell it like it IS!"

"Well, that's why I'm here Tramella. You know outside of my parents, I respect you and your opinion more than anyone in this world. What do you think about me just at least scaling back to weekends and going to school full-time? I really don't think I can take being out in the field too much longer. I mean I'm doing it, I feel like I do a good job but it's just taking the life out of me. I need something more challenging," Cassie whined.

"Look, baby I don't want you to take this the wrong way, but I don't want you to ever forget how you got to the sad state you were in when we met! I'll never forget the struggle I saw in your eyes; your whole demeanor was pitiful that day in Walmart. There you were a new mother and had not a twenty-dollar bill to your name," Tramella said driving her point home.

Cassie sat there listening with a lump in her throat. As far as she felt she'd come in six months Cassie would never forget it either. She never wanted to go back to that time in her life. It was the lowest she'd ever been.

"Baby we put a lot of blame on Kerron and yes, absolutely he's to blame. But let's not forget how your parents did you as well…,"

Tramella said pausing for effect.

Cassie was all ears.

“It’s because they turned their backs on you baby. Now I don’t mean to talk bad on your parents, I know they ya’ people but who does that? To their only child at that! Only grandbaby out in the cold?” Tramella shook her long, golden dreadlocks violently.

“I couldn’t see doing anything so foul to my only child. I have a son. I could never do my baby so dirty. Baby, I’m a mother before anything! Then add to the fact you’re a young woman with a child? Your own parents would have had you out in these streets doing anything strange for a little bit of change! What kind of parents would put their child in such a bad position? Now Y'all relationship is on the mend because they don’t have to take care of you or KJ. Auntie Mella made sure of that baby!”

Cassie nodded her head digesting every word.

Tramella was feeding her nothing but the truth. This is exactly the reason why the last six months, Cassie ran every major decision in her life past Tramella. From choosing her car to the townhouse she’d rented. Tramella’s approval meant the world to Cassie.

“Now both of your parents are career people. You have a child to take care of. In six short months you’ve been able to get a nice ass car, a townhome…you’re doing well for yourself. I wish I was doing that good at twenty years old, shit! No baby, you quitting to go to school full-time would be a huge mistake. Your parents will be singing a different tune with you if all of a sudden they have to take care of you and peanut here,” she said nodding her head affectionately towards KJ using the pet name she’d given him when he was just two months old.

“I didn’t think about all that Auntie,” Cassie replied solemnly. Where had her head been?

“I know you didn’t!” Tramella said hopping up from her seat and clapping her hands loudly. “That’s why you have me in your life. All you young girls need is a little direction. Look, I know being a long-term CNA ain’t right for everyone. To be honest, though, I always knew you were different. Take Sharquita and Prenisha for instance. They’ll be doing this type of work the rest of their lives. Wiping ass all day long and be content with it too! Some young women are satisfied as long as they can run out and buy some outfits and put on for the ‘Gram! But baby I already saw potential in you. Been seen it! I was just waiting for you to get tired of the daily grind and come let Auntie know you were ready to progress,” Tramella said reaching out to rub Cassie’s arm soothingly as she winked her eye at her.

Cassie was literally beaming from the inside out; her smile was so wide she had to be showing all 32 teeth. Tramella made her feel smart and that she could conquer the world.

“See, women like you and I weren’t meant to wipe ass and give bed baths all our life. Shit, I always had bigger and better dreams! Let Auntie iron out a few details with Mickey and see about getting you trained in the office with me! How does that sound? Keep taking your little online classes, hell you can even do some of your work in the office when there’s downtime.”

“Really, Tramella? You would do that for me?” Cassie gasped excitedly. *Thank you God for bringing Tramella into my life,* Cassie silently prayed.

“Ain’t I your Auntie? Your Fairy-Fuckin’ Godmother? Of course, I would! The Lord didn’t bring me into your life to let you fall down! Baby, sky ain’t even the muthafuckin’ limit when I take you under my wing. Ain’t no ceilings when you’re blessed and highly favored,” Tramella bragged. Tramella’s phone buzzed and she quickly looked at it.

“Baby, excuse me, I need to take this phone call in my office. We just had a last-minute sick call.”

“Go ahead,” Cassie said smiling at the thought of what new opportunities Tramella could offer her.

Tramella was amazing. The perfect blend of street smarts and class. Cassie wanted to be just like her one day.

“Damn what Y'all in here cooking?” Vontavis said entering the kitchen. Cassie’s eyes went straight to the dick print in Vontavis’ grey sweatpants. *Damn, I can tell this nigga ain’t even trying to contain that elephant tusk hanging between his legs!* Cassie thought lecherously. It had been so long since she’d felt the touch of a man, just being in the presence of Vontavis had her panties soaking wet and her pussy quivering. Cassie crossed her legs to quell the growing desire she felt for Vontavis. During the last six months, every encounter she had with the young thug left her wanting to know more about him.

Vontavis was always personable with her but there were times she questioned her own attractiveness when she was around his fine ass. Granted she knew he was off limits to her, but he never even made a move. That’s the part that had her feeling some type of way. Every time she visited Tramella, which was often, Cassie made it a point to look her absolute best. Vontavis was a complete mystery to her and she craved to know more about him. Cassie had scoured every social media spot trying to find out anything about him but he was elusive which only served to fuel her curiosity about him.

“I don’t know exactly. Your mama was already cooking when I got here and I had a lot on my mind we’ve been over here talking,” Cassie said softly as she watched Vontavis rummage through the pots on the stove.

“Looks like these oxtails are tender as mother’s love up in this

muthafucka. I'on know how Tramella did that since she doesn't know anything about that. Peas and rice, okay, she's burning up in here tonight I see."

Cassie was caught off guard by his comment about Tramella. Quite frankly she was a little pissed that he would talk so reckless about his own mother and the woman who'd literally saved her life.

Tramella breezed back into the kitchen with her Birkin bag in tow.

"Cassie, baby, keep an eye on those tails on the stove. I have an issue with one of the CNAs I need to deal with. I'ma turn the rice and pigeon peas off now. Just my luck I'm the on-call supervisor tonight. Now see this is what you have to deal with when you take on a supervisory role! Are you sure you're up for this?"

Cassie nodded her head hard. "I sure am!"

Tramella then turned her attention toward her son and quickly scanned him up and down, noticing his grey sweatpants and his bulge. She huffed and rolled her eyes saying, "And Vontavis go put some damn real pants on walking around people. I swear niggas think they slick, you might as well be naked!" With that Tramella was out the door.

"Why do females say that shit? Niggas been walking around in grey sweatpants for years, now it's an issue?" Vontavis said looking down at himself baffled as he ran his hand over his thick muscled chest.

Cassie sat there and just ran her hand across her mouth mainly to make sure she wasn't drooling.

"I'on know, Auntie may have a point," Cassie said lowly. Watching as Vontavis interacted with KJ, she couldn't help but wish KJ had a daddy around. He'd picked the baby boy out of the walker and was effortlessly playing airplane with him throughout the kitchen. Her dad played with KJ too but after about ten minutes he was complaining about the slipped disc in his back from playing tennis. KJ's giggles echoed throughout the kitchen.

Vontavis eventually put KJ back in the walker and came over to the table where Cassie had sat watching him mesmerized.

"So, what's going on with you? You don't like the job anymore?"

Cassie didn't want to sound ungrateful.

"No, it's not that. I just want to concentrate on moving forward and getting my actual degree. I want to go back to school full-time. I can't lie, I thought this job would include more duties that a nurse performed…," Cassie confessed.

Vontavis laughed.

"Instead you're over there wiping saggy nuts and under old lady titties. I get it, but you thought the job was going to be something different because that's what you were led to think. You were in a bad

spot so you fell for it hook, line and sinker. Why are you over here discussing your future with Tramella instead of your own mama?"

"Tramella is just like family to me…"

"You don't know shit about that lady. You've known her what six or seven months? I'm pretty sure she talked you out of quitting. Y'all need to stop blowing this lady's head up so damn much," Vontavis said leaning in and looking into Cassie's eyes.

"Why are you always so negative about Tramella? Your mom means a lot to all of us. Maybe you just don't see what you have in front of you either. I love my parents but they were not supportive of me. A perfect stranger was."

"Oh she's far from perfect, but you can't see that right now. So let me just shut the fuck up."

"Please do!"

"Oh you're sexy and you have a smart mouth too huh?"

Cassie's clit thumped at the thought of him calling her sexy. At last, she finally knew he noticed her at all. Cassie bit her bottom lip and a dimple sank into her cheek.

"So where is little man's daddy at?" Vontavis asked nosily. He already knew, but he wanted to hear it straight from her mouth. Unbeknownst to Cassie, Vontavis was actually very aware of the latest happenings in the beautiful young CNA's life. His interest in her and her adorable son was pure and genuine. He just didn't like the fact she seemed to worship his mother so much. If it wasn't for the fact she was always over here visiting his mother, he would have expressed his interest in her months ago, but her fixation with Tramella held him back.

"Locked up."

"Please tell me you ain't one of these dumb bitches out here acting like you're in jail just because your man is. That nigga probably in there getting all kinda boy pussy…shit if he ain't the pussy his damn self," Vontavis said busting out laughing.

Cassie pursed her lips coyly. "I'm free to do as I please thank you."

"Well let's please do each other then," Vontavis replied boldly.

She didn't know what to think. All these months she'd felt invisible to Vontavis, almost like he didn't like her at all. Now he was straight up propositioning her.

"I, uh, what about your mom?" Cassie stammered.

"Oh, so you scared?" Vontavis said in a seductive tone, further making Cassie's pussy quiver in lustful excitement.

Cassie couldn't say a word. She just stood there, frozen, her mouth a bit trembling. Finally, she said, "I mean, I, ughh, I really—"

Without hesitation, Vontavis grabbed her and began planting wet, succulent kisses all up and down her neck. "Now is not

the time to be afraid. Fuck you afraid of? You know you've been wanting this from the moment you saw me," Vontavis moaned into her ear as he ran his mouth up and down Cassie's neck. He further pushed himself into Cassie, and at this point, she had no other choice but to part her legs and let him in between. She could feel his thick dick bulge rub up against her throbbing clit. The more she felt Vontavis gyrate himself in between her thighs, the more her panties soaked. Her breathing intensified. She was damn near gasping for air at this point. Her eyes were closed and she just wanted Vontavis to whisk her away and lay it down.

All of sudden Vontavis pulled himself back and then looked Cassie in her eyes. "Nonetheless, we are supposed to be responsible adults, right?

Cassie quickly gathered her thoughts trying to figure out exactly what Vontavis meant. He slightly nodded over to KJ. Baby boy had the biggest grin on his face as he reached his arms out wanting his mother to pick him up.

"Oh yeah, damn…KJ. Well, I need to get going, I ughh, yeah, let me take off. I got so much stuff to do," Cassie stammered as she quickly shuffled herself, KJ and her belongings.

Vontavis, holding his arms, just laughed and disappeared off to his room.

Once Cassie made her way to her car and got KJ situated in his car seat, she sat behind the steering wheel trying to figure out exactly what just happened. Her eyes were wide open, staring at nothing in particular. Vontavis pulled a quick one over on her, completely fucking her mind up. Now she had to have the urge satisfied. As she held onto the steering wheel, the car still off, something told her to run back into the house and get the best dick down in her life. But she looked in her rear-view mirror and saw KJ patiently staring back at her. She huffed and then let out a little chuckle. Reality set in.

"Ok, little man, sorry I kept you out so late. Let's get back home so mommy can feed you, give you a nice bubble bath and get you to sleep!"

Chapter Seventeen

"Alright, little man, you sleep tight! Don't let the bed bugs bite!" Cassie lightly and quietly giggled as she tucked KJ into his crib.

She took her time wrapping the light sky-blue blanket around his semi-chubby frame not wanting to awaken him from his sleep. After getting back to her townhouse, she quickly whipped up a meal for her son, made her own dinner and then bathed him. Now that he was well fed and bathed, he quickly fell asleep. And Cassie too was ready to lay it down for the night.

Once she finished putting KJ to sleep, she took slow and deliberate steps out of the room and made her way back to her master bedroom. She got out of her clothes, hopped in the shower and slipped into her PJs – just a pair of boy shorts and an old Nike "Just Do It" t-shirt. She hopped in her bed and turned on the television. An old rerun of the Chappelle Show was blaring on Comedy Central. Usually, Cassie had to sleep with the TV on to help her fall asleep.

She tried her best to pretend like nothing was bothering her, but the weird yet seductive moment she shared with Vontavis back at his house couldn't leave her mind. All her mind stayed on was the feeling of Vontavis' full lips planting the most delicate kisses up and down her neck. She could very much still feel his dick bulging from his pants – the same bulge that eventually met the middle of her thighs causing her pussy to erupt and overflow with juices.

Cassie took a deep breath and shook her head. "Oh well," she sighed feeling so sexually frustrated at the moment she could barely stand it. Cassie flipped through several channels before she finally landed onto the Discovery Channel. A program about the mating habits of Zebras was on and it was the perfect boring programming to induce sleep. 10:43 PM dashed across her clock on her nightstand, her eyes felt heavy. She was seconds away from floating away into her dreams.

Ding-Dong! Ding-Dong! The doorbell to the townhouse rang.

Cassie suddenly opened her eyes and was jolted out of her looming sleep.

"Who the hell is that?!?" She got up out of her bed and quickly slipped on some leggings she had on her dresser. Once she had them

on, she darted downstairs to her foyer and then looked out the peephole. It was Vontavis, standing there, no smirk on his face, his eyes turned to seductive slits.

Cassie's breathing once again intensified. What in the hell was he doing here? She wondered as she quickly opened the door. "Vontavis, what's up?!?"

Without saying a word he dashed right into her presence, grabbed her and resumed the session they started hours earlier. Why she even bothered asking the question in the first place? She didn't know her damn self. There was only one solid reason why Vontavis showed up at her townhouse this late at night. He was ready to give her what she had been wanting now for so many months. And truth be told, he wanted her too.

No further words were exchanged as the two ferociously went at each other, their lips interlocked with one another. All one could hear at this point was the mixture of kisses, heavy breathing and erotic moans pouring from both individuals. Vontavis shut the door with his foot and reached back to lock it. Still firmly holding Cassie, planting kisses all up and down her face, he marched her into the dark living room.

Cassie let out purr after purr, not wanting Vontavis to stop. All of sudden, with all the might he had in his body, he lifted Cassie up off the ground and marched her upstairs. Although she was in his embrace, she still couldn't keep her mouth off him, wanting to taste every single inch of chocolate skin on his neck and face.

Once upstairs, Vontavis looked around a bit, partly confused as to where her master bedroom was at. "Where I'm goin'?" he asked. "Down the hall, past KJ's room." That's all Vontavis needed to hear. No need to say anything else.

They were now in her room and Vontavis delicately placed Cassie down on her bed. He took his shirt and undershirt off in one motion, exposing his tatted up muscular chest, lightly flexing his pec muscles. He licked his lips and let out a light chuckle. He then pulled Cassie closer to him and then pulled her leggings and panties off in one swift motion, casting them off to the side. He glanced down and adored her lightly shaven pussy; it was the most gorgeous, mouthwatering succulent-looking pink pussy he'd ever seen before in his life. The one thing that had him even amped up, even more, was that Cassie was already super-wet; her pussy lips were already covered in sweet, luscious glaze.

Vontavis then proceeded to get down on his knees. He parted Cassie's legs wide open and dived head in, devouring her like none other. Admittedly Kerron was awesome in bed, or at least so she thought. Truth be told Vontavis was the second man she'd ever been

with, and now that she had a base of comparison, Vontavis not only was more enticing and patient, but his pussy eating game was off the fucking chain. He wrapped his lips around her pulsating clit and suck on it as he slid two fingers inside her warm pink middle, instantly finding her g-spot. As he continued to suck on her clit, he gently massaged her spot. Cassie's legs quivered and spasmed, her body convulsed and every inch of her skin felt like it had reached a heightened sensitivity. Her eyes rolled to the back of her head, and all one could see were the whites. With one finger in her mouth, she panted and moaned, damn near on the verge of busting off her third nut. Yup! She'd already come twice once his mouth met her middle.

After getting done devouring Cassie, Vontavis was now ready to fuck. He didn't even want to get his dick sucked. Fuck all of that. He was ready to see what Cassie's pussy was all about. He quickly stood up, pulled down his pants and boxers, immediately exposing his hardened shaft. All ten inches of his meat was already erect and ready to do some serious damage. Cassie gawked at Vontavis' dick in full amazing awe but truth be told, she was partly scared that his dick was going to do damage to her insides. But fuck all of that, this pain she was about to experience was all she was looking for. Pain coming from a man who exuded nothing more than brazen confidence mixed with a slight sense of street passion.

Vontavis pulled Cassie towards him, flipped her on her knees and immediately set her up in doggy style position. With her ass tooted up in the air, he gawked down at her entirely drenched pussy. He leaned down and took another quick sniff and devouring of her ass and pussy, getting it ready so the young CNA could take all the dick he was about to give her. Cassie clenched her sheets, closed her eyes and moaned as Vontavis' tongue went in and out of her pussy hole and booty hole. The young thug then leaned back and slapped his dick in between Cassie's ass cheeks, teasing her that his pipe was about to go in. He tickled her pussy's entrance with his dick head and then without hesitation, eased into her tight, creamy canal, moaning as he felt her walls easily conform to his girth.

As Vontavis took long, deliberately slow strokes in and out of the puss, working the middle to perfection, he grabbed Cassie's neck and amped up the fucking. Cassie's moans all of sudden turned into muffled screams as she felt the dick dig deeper and deeper, filling up every nook and cranny of her vaj.

"Damn, girl, you fuckin' lovin' this dick, ain't you?" Vontavis mumbled seductively as he ferociously dug deeper and deeper inside Cassie. "Fuck yeah, fuck me harder," she spat back as she threw her ass back in a dance, showing Vontavis that she was giving him all that pussy.

As the young, brutish enforcer and son of Tramella held onto Cassie's neck with his left hand, he took his right hand and migrated down to Cassie's crack. He then took his thumb and inserted inside Cassie's booty hole. Now the young CNA found herself being double penetrated. A big, thick dick was pumping her juicy pussy. And a muscular, hard thumb was massaging the inside of her ass. The feeling of being filled up in all of her orifices was giving Cassie all types of life.

Vontavis continued to slide his velvety steel pipe in and out of Cassie and she creamed all over his dick. After a few more moments of intense, luscious fucking the two of them came explosively. Vontavis collapsed onto Cassie. He grabbed her and pulled her into his embrace. As their two naked and sweaty bodies clasped onto one another, they both took heavy, deep breaths wondering what their future was going to be.

Chapter Eighteen

"Bontrice what you over there cooking tonight?" Aretha asked meekly. Her son's baby mama was a beast. Literally. Aretha, who didn't bow down to anyone, walked on egg-shells around the angry black woman …and Aretha did mean black too. Bontrice had skin the color of onyx. Aretha couldn't for the life of her, figure out what attracted her son to the charcoal black woman. That black skin of hers must have had him hypnotized, or he had a fetish. One of the two.

Aretha couldn't lie on Bontrice, she was a black stallion for sure. Firm D-Cup titties and an ass and waistline these young hoes were going under the knife to achieve. Her face was equally as attractive, Bontrice was in fact very beautiful. But she was just so…, so black! Her son Gerron loved Bontrice's dirty ass drawls too.

"Why Aretha? You don't even fuck with me like that. So I fail to see why you keep calling my damn phone at 5:30 on the dot like you have an appointment with me? What's really going on here?" the young woman spat angrily through the phone.

Bontrice had long ago stopped trying to win Aretha's respect or affection. From the day she'd been introduced to Gerron's mother, every comment out of his mother's mouth led back to her rich, deep dark complexion. The back-handed "compliments" not to mention the cruel remarks made during her three pregnancies. It was hard to comprehend, but Aretha was no different than a lot of other black people in this regard. Aretha was dark-skinned her damn self. It just made her feel superior in some sick way to put Bontrice down because she was of a darker hue. The same way fat people loved to put down anyone fatter than them. Bontrice just couldn't understand the rationale. Bitch, you're still dark or fat, whatever the case might be.

Aretha pinched the bridge of her nose on the other end of the line to maintain some sense of self-control before she cussed this black cunt out!

"Why are you so angry all the time Bontrice? Like you're mad at the world."

"Look, Aretha, I don't have time for childish games with an old woman at that. We are way past the point of being fake with one another. Instead of calling me asking what I'm cooking, ask your son

what he's providing in this house for his children for me TO cook. Because I'm about tired of carrying the load all by myself and I'm about to pack his shit and send him over there with you. Since you act like that's where you want him to be any damn way. You're about to get your wish."

Aretha was shocked to hear this. She loved being the Queen Bee over her three sons. She relished the thought of her three handsome sons doting on her and the women they dated scrambling for her approval. But these days shit wasn't going as planned. Cassie was ducking and dodging her phone calls, Bontrice stayed ready to fly off at the mouth and well, in regard to her oldest son Derron, Aretha was slowly having to face the fact Derron was a little "sweet". It had been a good year since he'd brought a woman around yet every time Aretha looked up, his friend Tevin was with him. Whereas Derron was very masculine, Tevin was flaming as a hot cheeto! Something was definitely up with that and she intended to get to the bottom of it.

"Well I just wanted to let you know I'm trying to get this EBT card again so I can take you to fill up the fridge. Wasn't that nice when I did that for you a while back?"

"Hold up, wait a minute. You did that for your son and your grandkids. You were supplementing for the basic things your son isn't providing. I just don't want this conversation going on another second like you did something for ME Aretha. I hold down a job, always have. My babies were going to eat regardless," Bontrice replied hotly.

Aretha was biting her tongue so hard she thought she tasted blood. This is exactly what she was talking about? Why was this bitch so mad all the time?

"Now Bontrice you already know I know you take care of home. I'ma get off this phone now but let me know when it's a good time for me to get over there and see my little chocolate drops!" Aretha said.

After quickly saying goodbye, hanging up the phone…and making sure the call was really disconnected, "I mean shit drops!" Aretha yelled across the room. Taking her anger out on her innocent grandchildren.

These last six months had been hell on Aretha. Pure anguish and she blamed all of it on Cassie Pierce. The only thing Cassie had done the past few months was have a major glow up as the young people said these days. Meanwhile her baby Kerron was in jail.

Cassie had shut down any talk of Kerron with her threatening to stop bringing her grandson by to visit if she even spoke his name. How the fuck could she ask her to do that? Honestly, it made Aretha wonder if KJ was even Kerron's son. What woman with a new baby walked so easily away from her child's father? These young hoes out here didn't know the meaning of ride or die as far as she was

concerned.

Aretha had set up a GoFundMe account and had only gotten a measly fifty dollars' worth of donations from family and friends to get her youngest son proper legal representation. No one had a dime to chip in yet in this short amount of time, Cassie was pushing a new whip and had moved across town into a townhouse? Cassie was a muthafuckin' lie!

Aretha knew damn well-fixing oatmeal for old people in the morning and giving sponge baths was not paying like that. Shit if that was the case, she needed to take her own self over there and get hired on. 'The same money I told her to ask her parents to help Kerron, she used for herself. I know that yella bitch did," Aretha thought ruefully as she was not seeming to find satisfaction with either of her son's women at the moment.

Aretha was trying to hold it together but she was falling apart inside. No decent mother could stand to see their child suffering in jail. The last time she'd made it down to the county to visit her son, Kerron looked a mess. Both of his eyes were black and his top lip was swollen. Kerron said he thought one of his top teeth was loose. Her baby was being abused in there! Every night before she closed her eyes she prayed Kerron was holding onto his manhood inside of that cell. Aretha didn't care about the gays. She'd had plenty of gay friends throughout the years. Hell if Derron was gay she loved him just the same. Aretha just didn't want anyone raping her son.

What am I gonna do to get this ten thousand dollar they need to get started on my boy's case? Aretha thought pacing her dilapidated living room. She grabbed her pack of cigarettes from the coffee table and slapped it against the palm of her hands several times before whipping one out and lighting up.

"Hell nawl. This lil young boujie hoe thinks she's going to duck and dodge Aretha Davis? Now, what if I did need me some more stamps? This bitch Cassie thinks she's just going to blow me off like this? My son is in jail being exposed to who knows what and she doesn't give a damn about him? Liable to be stuck in a cell with some big nigga name Marvin! I wonder how much Cassie cares about Kerron's son? If that hoe doesn't want Kerron, what the fuck does she want with Kerron Jr.? Not much if you ask me," Aretha thought as a plan quickly formed in her mind. "Uhhuh bitch. I'ma need my grandson over here with me sooner rather than later. Ain't no telling how she's over there treating my little crumb-snatcha!" She thought KJ was the cutest of her grandchildren with his light bright skin tone.

Chapter Nineteen

It was noon on the first Saturday Cassie had taken off in what seemed to be months. She really needed the day off too. It had been three months since Tramella had taken her out of the CNA rotation and began training her in the office. Cassie never imagined there was so much to learn at such a fast pace but she loved it. It made her feel important to learn about all the state regulations and how to invoice Medicaid for the services Morning Star was providing to clients all over the city. It was already to the point where Tramella was having her sign off on official documentation that was turned into the state.

KJ was entranced with Paw Patrol on T.V. and Cassie had her mind somewhere it really didn't need to be. On Vontavis. How the hell did this nigga just fuck me so good three months ago and ghost a bitch like that? she thought. She'd never been a victim of the term "ghosting" but that's surely what had happened. Unfortunately, Vontavis had been the best sex she'd ever had so it wasn't too easy for her to forget. Other guys had hit on her, but she certainly didn't want a trail of men in and out of her home. Cassie was trying to raise a young prince and even at such a young age, she didn't want her son exposed to a virtual carousel of various men.

Cassie's cell phone rang and she looked at the unfamiliar phone number frowning. UGH! Let me go ahead and pick up. Tramella wasn't lying when she said having a higher position came with more responsibilities. Cassie had been the weekend point of contact person several times. It was annoying as hell to know her day could be interrupted at any time. Let me answer this in case it is one of the CNA's and they don't realize I'm not on call this weekend, Cassie thought. She hated, she'd given a few of her co-workers her private number instead of the beeper they were supposed to call.

"Hello?"

"Hey, Boo!"

"Tamekia? Girl is that you?" Cassie said sitting up in the couch. It was none other than her favorite cousin.

"Now girl, you killing me with all these new phone numbers all the

damn time!"

"Girl, you know how I do!" Tamekia tittered on the other end of the line.

"Oh my God, I miss you so much. When am I going to get to see you girl? A bitch sitting over here a whole mama now and my favorite cousin hasn't even seen my baby yet except for pictures on IG."

"I know guhl! But I'ma do you one better baby. I mean if you'll have me."

"What do you mean?" Cassie asked. She was sure Tamekia could see her grin all the way in Jackson, Mississippi as hard as she was smiling.

"Cassie, girl I have to get away from these country ass niggas around here, girl, I swear! I can't deal with country bumpkins all my damn life. I'm ready to see some new things, have some different experiences. Get me a city nigga. I know last we talked you said you were making good money as a CNA, I thought about maybe coming there, and if it was okay with you maybe I could stay with you and the baby for a little while just until I could get a deposit to get in my own place," Tamekia said hoping she didn't sound too desperate over the phone. Not only did she want to leave Jackson, she had no choice.

"Girl, please! Why are you acting like you even had to ask? Mi casa es su casa!" Cassie said practicing a little of the Spanish she was learning from Maria, the receptionist, at work.

"When do you want to come? In a couple of months?"

"Chile, please! A bitch getting on the Greyhound tonight!"

Damn! That's quick Cassie thought but quickly dismissed any misgivings she might have had if she'd put some thought into it. She hadn't seen Tamekia in two years and not only was she a relative, but outside of Porscha, she was one of her dearest friends. Cassie and Porscha still spoke of course but there was still a little old tension lingering in the way at times. At least that was the way it felt for Cassie.

"Let me know when you're at the Greyhound and I'm there," Cassie crowed. "Wait a minute? What do Uncle and Auntie have to say about you leaving? And so fast at that? You don't have to tie up any loose ends? Give a two weeks' notice at your job or something?" Cassie pressed.

"Girl no! What job? That's why I'm in a rush to get the fuck up outta here. Ain't no jobs in Jackson. Not unless you want to work over at the Tyson Chicken Plant. Which I do not! Bitch, I like to eat chicken, not pluck chicken. So it's time for me to make some money moves," Tamekia said.

"Well, girl, come on! Let me know when you'll be here and I'll start lining you up a job. Tamekia girl, because how I was living six

months ago? Honey the struggle was too muthafuckin' real."

After exchanging a bit more small talk, Cassie ended the phone call with her favorite cousin. Cassie was geeked to have Tamekia on the way. Cassie walked over to KJ, leaned down and planted a kiss on his chubby cheek and walked upstairs to her spare bedroom. *Shoot it looks good in here. I wouldn't have even been able to take my own cousin in had Tamekia called me six months ago. Yet another reason to give all the glory to Tramella,* Cassie thought before immediately becoming angry.

Shit, truth be told, Cassie was glad she'd never fed into the negativity Vontavis spewed when it came to Tramella. She almost found herself on the cusp of going against Tramella to be with Vontavis if she had to. But then this nigga just upped and ghosted on her, never bothering to call or let alone try to see her again. Oh, Vontavis was a beast in the sack that was for damn sure. Maybe he didn't think I was? Cassie thought remorsefully. But he told me he loved being with me? Fuck it, let me get ready for my cousin. Tamekia said she would be calling with her trip details soon.

Cassie punched in Tramella's phone number.

"Hey, baby!"

"Hey, Auntie! I'm sorry to bother you with business on the weekend but I had something come up I wanted to run by you."

"Tell Auntie all about it."

"Well my favorite cousin just called me and she's going to be coming here from Jackson, Mississippi…,'

"Okay then! A thick country girl huh? How she look?" Tramella asked with her voice low.

Okaaay, that's weird! Cassie thought. Cassie had heard office gossip amongst the CNA's that Tramella was a raging lesbian. Whatever that was exactly. Cassie personally thought they were a bunch of ungrateful bitches. Just because a woman was strong, independent and not worried about a man she had to be a lesbian? What an ignorant way to think. Hell had she not met Tramella and gotten on her feet as quick as she had, they would have been calling her a lesbian too! At the time she met Tramella, Kerron was out and in her damn face, she should have switched sides then. Matter of fact, Vontavis wasn't making her opinion of men any better right now!

"Tamekia? Oh, she's gorgeous. And since you mentioned it, she is a nice, thick redbone. I wanted to know if we had any training sessions coming up she could get enrolled in. She'll need a job."

"Hell yeah! You know I only asked how she looked because…and please don't repeat this, but Morning Star likes to make sure we have a lineup of nice-looking CNAs representing us as a company. I make sure of that. You know? I get some of the White girls, Black, Asian and Hispanic and a few Exoticals, a nice mixture of looks and body types.

Never let it be said Morning Star isn't diverse. I aim to please!"

"I know you do, Auntie. And I'm going to thank you once again for giving me this opportunity."

"Now stop it! Ain't we family?"

"Yes, we are!" Cassie replied feeling invigorated. Little did Tramella know she'd just taken Cassie's mind off her sorry, ghosting ass son if only for a few minutes.

Cassie talked to Tramella a few more minutes before she got off the phone and went back downstairs to check on KJ and start making dinner. Cassie was throwing together a quick meal of tacos, Spanish rice and some refried beans on the side. She was just about done when my doorbell rang. Who in the world was this? Cassie rarely had company over and never unexpected visitors. Prenisha learned the hard way when she just popped over one day without calling. Her car happened to be parked outside but Cassie refused to open her damn door. No, ma'am. You need to call me first!

Cassie reached the door and looked out the peephole to see none other than Vontavis standing there staring up at her. Cassie could damn near see up his nostrils when she pulled the door open angrily.

"Back up nigga I can see all up your damn nose!" Cassie said wedging herself between the open door so Vontavis didn't get the idea he was welcome inside.

"Whassup?" Vontavis asked running his tongue across his lower lip.

"Can I do something for you Vontavis? Did Tramella send you by with something for me? Because if not, I really have better things to do," Cassie said through narrowed eyes. She was too through. He could at least apologize for treating her like a trick. Instead, he was standing on her porch with his arms crossed looking down on her like she should be happy to be graced with his presence.

"I smell you're cooking something. Good 'cuz I'm hungry," Vontavis said pushing past Cassie and walking inside. At the entryway, he casually kicked off his shoes and peeled off his hoodie as if walking into her house was an everyday occurrence.

"Look, Vontavis! I'ma need you to leave. I haven't laid eyes on your ass in three months and now you think you can just barge in here and what?"

Vontavis shrugged his broad, muscular shoulders as he rustled through the pots on her stove.

"Shit eat some tacos with you I guess," he replied before walking over to KJ, lifting him out of his walker and tossing him around a bit. "Stop caging him up in this damn walker all the goddamn time," Vontavis said looking around her place real quick.

"I can clearly see Tramella has put her stamp all over this

muthafucka but KJ is a baby. Let him out so he can crawl around and explore. Stop worrying about him breaking something. This place ain't really baby-proofed at all."

"What the fuck do you know about babies and baby-proofing anything?" Cassie shouted stomping over to retrieve her child. "Give me my damn son!"

Vontavis held his hand out holding her back like she was crazy.

"Cassie, you seem angry. What's the damn problem? I'm not handing lil man over to you until you calm the fuck down. Do you have an issue with me? Did I do something to you?" Vontavis asked looking at her curiously. Which only served to make Cassie feel stupid.

Yes, Cassie had wanted him to call her the next day but he hadn't. Nor had he ever said he would. Which only made her feel even dumber. Technically she'd been mad at Vontavis for three months over expectations she'd built up in her own head. Cassie got the feeling by the way Vontavis was looking at her waiting for an answer, he couldn't wait to let her know just that.

Okay, nigga. Bet.

"How many tacos do you want Vontavis?" Cassie asked turning on her heel and walking back into the kitchen.

"Four please, and make sure I have everything on them too," he called out.

Cassie looked over at him with her palm itching because she wanted to slap his ass so bad. Twenty minutes later they were all sitting at the table eating quietly. Cassie didn't even know what to say to him for fear of playing herself again. That was not going to happen.

KJ nodded off after Vontavis was feeding him the ground beef and mashed potatoes Cassie had prepared for him before they sat down to eat.

"So what, you're feeding me but giving me the silent treatment? Are we beefing now or what?" Vontavis asked between bites of his taco.

"Not at all," Cassie replied her voice dry as hell.

"I am just now noticing this, but damn, your place is nice. I'm glad you made a nice home for yourself instead of fucking your money off like those birds Sharquita and Prenisha."

"Why are you so negative, Vontavis? Honestly, if this is all you came over here to do after not laying eyes on me for three months just please leave. I notice you're a very negative person. You never have anything nice to say. Even about your own mother. I don't want any part of that. Now for some odd reason obviously you still recalled where I live, you just didn't want to be here so please forget your way over here just as fast again, please. You're over here looking around, nigga you would have seen how my place looked three months ago if

you hadn't taken off before I could even crack my eyes open."

"Cassie, I just be trying to put your ass on to some shit without really taking it there with you. Read between the fuckin' lines and stop being so goddamn gullible and shit. I been knowing where the fuck you stay. Shit, it's my mama's rental. Before I slept with you I knew where you laid your goddamn head. When you lived in that shitty ass apartment, 6C, I knew that address too," Vontavis said shaking his head at her.

Cassie stood there not knowing if she had the luxury of being curious or should she be scared? Vontavis sounded like some kind of stalker. Her cell phone rang distracting her.

"Hello?" Cassie said absently looking at Vontavis as she answered the phone.

"Hey cuz! It's me. I'll be there in about three hours," Tamekia said.

"Three hours? You just asked me if you could come two hours ago!" Cassie said confused.

"Girl, I was already on the damn bus waiting at a stop! I know you love me and it was going to be cool if I came," Tamekia chirped sounding like a brand-new person on the phone. Two hours ago she was sounding all down in the mouth.

"Okay, well you know I'll be there to get you cuz. Text me when you're thirty minutes away. You know I have the baby with me so I don't want to be waiting in the car for too long but I'll be there and I can't wait to see you. Okay, I love you," Cassie said ending the call.

"Who you got coming over here to stay?" Vontavis asked not even trying to hide the fact he was all in her conversation.

"None of your damn business, Vontavis. Now if you're done with your food you can leave," Cassie said walking towards the door and opening it for him. She didn't know what to make of this little visit. But she had things to do before her cousin arrived and it didn't involve trying to figure out what was going on in Vontavis' head. Cassie was tired of men and their games.

Chapter Twenty

"Damn girl! You really are doing good at this whole CNA job aren't you?" Tamekia said rubbing her hands enviously along the seats of her cousin's car.

Tamekia was so happy to be out from the confines of that raggedy ass Greyhound bus she didn't know what to do! She was even more excited to be out of the state of Mississippi with her head still attached to her shoulders. Now all she had to do was lay low and make sure no one back home knew where she was. Tamekia gripped her purse close. She'd barely slept a wink on the bus for fear of someone snatching her purse while she slept. The knock-off cross body bag was already on one leg and she'd had to staple the strap and reinforce it with duct tape. It looked a hot mess. Even more so as she eyed the luxurious, butter-colored Birkin bag her cousin casually tossed in the console between them.

"Girl, thank you! I told you all about the hard time I was having a little less than a year ago. But now that you're here, we gon' get you on your feet. Wait until you meet Tramella. Now Tamekia, I know how your crazy ass can get sometimes, reading the hell out of folks and you ain't got no filter. But tone that shit down around Tramella, okay? I've already spoken to her about getting you into the next training class which starts next week. So it was perfect timing. Plus I really look up to Tramella, she made everything happen for me. This car, my townhouse, even the new position at my job."

"DAMN! A bitch got it like that?"

"Yes, she does. I'm telling you now if Tramella takes a liking to you, she can make a lot of good things happen for you," Cassie said looking at her cousin earnestly.

Cassie couldn't help but notice Tamekia's disheveled appearance but Cassie didn't want to judge. Maybe it was due to being on a bus ride for so long. Tamekia looked like just the type of people she claimed she was trying to escape from. A country bumpkin! Cassie wasn't trying to put her southern relatives down or anything but Tamekia just looked a little rough around the edges, like she'd been on hard times. *Hell, she may have been, but we're going to turn all that around*, Cassie thought. Just like Tramella did for me.

“Okay but what if this lady doesn’t like me? She’s going to stop me from running up a check or what? Is this hoe gon’ try and stop my bag? Tamekia Johnson doesn’t kiss ass, baby!” Tamekia said raising her eyebrow and tooting her lips.

Cassie sucked her teeth loudly as she whipped her car around the corner.

“No, I ain’t saying it like that. You can get hired on and everything and go in and do your job and go home like a lot of the other CNA’s do. But, if Tramella gets a good vibe from you, she is going to play favorites. That’s not official mind you but I’m not blind. Hell, I was off rotation and into an office position within six months because of her. Tramella took me right on the damn car lot and had her hook-up qualify me for this car loan. Shit, fuckin’ around with Kerron’s ass had my score low as hell. But this is brand new baby! Then as soon as she could, got me into this spot. Tramella is into real estate. She’s actually my landlord. She has several properties around the city. I would never be able to get into the place I’m in on my own. But she’s connected all over. The main thing I like about Tramella is she’s humble. Even when she’s pointing something out, it ain’t like she’s holding it over your head. She’s like the cool Auntie you wish you grew up with. Now I know a few of the other ladies were pissed about me moving up so quickly, but Tramella checked them all right in front of me and squashed any animosity,” Cassie said.

“What did she do?” Tamekia asked skeptically. It sounded like her cousin was no more than the office brown-noser if you asked her. The dreaded kiss-ass coworker.

“Well, she just noticed a few of the chicks I’ve been cool with from the start trying to shade me and leave me out of things after I started in the office. But Tramella sat us all down one day and explained to them that she’d never considered them to work in the office because they always seemed content with what they were doing and had never actually asked to do anything different within the company. She was like how can Y'all get mad when Y'all never once asked but Cassie did? They had to admit it was the truth. They didn’t even want to work in the office. Just big mad for nothing. We set all that petty shit to the side though, we’re all like sisters. Sharquita, Prenisha and a few other ladies.”

Tamekia sat in the seat tittering.

“Bish, really? Sharquita? Prenisha? What the hell kinda hoodrat names Y'all got going on in the Chi?”

Cassie’s eyes widened.

“Umm, evidently the same kind Y'all got in Jackson, TAMEKIA!”

Tamekia pursed her lips tight.

“Fuck you bitch. My name is normal these days.”

“Lie to yourself, not to me heffa!” Cassie quipped before they both started laughing. “On the real Tamekia, girl I’m glad you’re here,” Cassie said reaching across to grab her cousin’s hand.

Tamekia grinned back. She was definitely on the move when she’d called Cassie earlier today but despite all that, she’d reached out because she loved and trusted her cousin. She’d been in a bind merely hours ago and was ready to leave the past in the past.

Tramella checked to make sure the door was locked and the towel tucked firmly at the door was in place. She was in the office after hours and everyone was supposed to be gone but you never knew.

“So how are the new girls working out?” Mickey asked as the sound of low and no budget fucking floated through the air from the speakers on his work computer courtesy of the site Pornhub.

“Shit, they good. They gon’ stay that way to before I have to put this size twelve up someone’s ass,” Tramella rasped as her eyes closed to slits. The bomb cush had her feeling euphoric after a long hard day. Tremella couldn’t wait until all her deviousness paid off and all she had to do was sit back, occasionally slap a bitch up and collect her muthafuckin’ coins.

“What’s going on with that thick red-bone you just hired? I might need to holler at her ass,” Mickey said rubbing his crotch, his beady, black jaundiced eyes never even lifted from the computer screen as he watched a dirty blonde on the screen spread her pale pink pussy lips open for a brotha to lap at her.

“Mickey how many times do I have to tell you this, you ain’t hollering and none of these hoes! We gettin’ this money not screwing the help. Damn nigga,” Tremella spat. Sometimes Mickey’s silverback gorilla looking ass really got on her damn nerves! She often wondered how he’d ever made it this far with all the dirt he did. She’d been working with Mickey exclusively for ten years and truth be told… Tramella thought Mickey was dumber than a box of rocks.

To hear Tramella tell it, Morning Star had thrived since she’d basically stepped in and took over the helm. Business was booming in ways Mickey didn’t even know about.

“Fuck you Tramella, when you keep your strap-on out of the CNA's twats, I’ll keep my dick out.”

They both fell out laughing.

“You right! But on the serious side, leave Tamekia alone. I see something in that young hoe’s eyes I ain’t seen in a long time. That’s a hungry bitch right there. I can tell she’s ready to get it out the mud. Cassie is right where we need her to be. You see I already have her

signing off on all the hours we submit to the state, right? Just last week I had her scour over every client we had and bill for overtime hours."

"Make sure you actually send some of these dumb broads out there to work some of the hours too. Sometimes they ask the clients."

Tramella sucked her teeth cutting her eyes at Mickey.

"I know what to do. Mickey, what do you think I should do about Vontavis?"

"What do you mean? Is he okay?" Mickey asked concerned. He thought of Vontavis like the son he never had. Yeah, he raised and doted on Shandalyn all her life but deep down inside, Mickey had long ago suspected he was shooting nothing but blanks. After all the tender, young hoes he'd bedded over the years no one had put a baby on him yet. When Shandalyn's mother had approached him about her being pregnant, they'd only had sex twice. Yes, it only took one time, but everyone including his own mother looked at Shandalyn as a newborn and said she didn't belong to him. Mickey just had a soft spot for babies and refused to find out the truth. So she was his. He loved her fiercely and was intent on giving her the best life had to offer. He'd been surrounded by so many whores in his life he wanted her to remain pure as long as possible. Which is why he watched any young nigga in Shandalyn's vicinity like a hawk. In eighteen years no one else had come up pregnant.

Well, except that one time.

Mickey was older and wiser that time around and had to get that baby tested. That baby looked like a half-breed. Mickey had wanted to believe the green-eyed blonde-haired black baby was his but it had literally taken Tramella laughing in his face and calling him crazy to believe the young THOT was trying to pull a fast one on him. The paternity test ended up proving the baby was 100%, not his.

Vontavis was as close to a son as he was ever going to get and that was okay by him. He'd known Tramella forever and had been an active role model to Vontavis since he was a young kid.

Tramella sighed loudly.

"He's just been kind of out of it the last few months. Barely coming home at night, half-assed answering my calls and texts. I mean luckily I haven't needed him for anything major. I just don't know what's going on with him. Do you think it's anything I need to be worried about?" Tramella asked for once sounding genuinely concerned about her son.

Tramella knew she'd never been what anyone could ever call motherly toward her only child but she did love him. Vontavis was hers. When she'd gotten pregnant it was one of the worst times of her life. A period in time she rarely discussed with anyone. Tramella had

internally battled being a lesbian all throughout her middle school days. Kids back then weren't as free to come out and tell their parents like nowadays. These days some struggled with their sexuality yes, but Tramella had never seen as many openly gay teenagers in all her life. So, of course, she hid it all through school. She'd been dating Vontavis's father and was playing in the WNBA at the time when she'd discovered she was pregnant. It was as if the second she found out she was pregnant, her body felt invaded by something that didn't belong there. She'd been sure Vontavis's dad would be in agreement with her having an abortion but he was all in. He'd come up in church and was in love with Tramella. All she wanted to do was get rid of it, but once the nigga ran and told all her family and friends, what could she do? She'd only been having sex with him to feel "normal" anyway. Now she was stuck with a baby she didn't want and at that time was officially in love with one of her female teammates. It was a horrible period in her life which was the reason she was so rough on him. Tramella had barely been able to care for him as a baby.

So she let his dad take over. Until she needed him back. Tramella straightened back up in her seat briefly sobering herself up. She hated strolling through memory lane. Times had been rough for her back then.

Mickey waved his hand.

"Vontavis is a young nigga! Tavvy-Tav is probably out here knee-deep in some young, tight pussy! Why do you think he's supposed to be sitting up under you 24/7? I've been told him he needs to get his own place. Vontavis is on the payroll and makes more than enough money to be living on his own any damn way. A man needs his own space. Can't even dig up in the pussy good without his mama listening. That's if you let him bring women in at all and if you do, I'm sure your ass trying to sniff the pussy faster than Tav is! Calm the fuck down, he's all right," Mickey said dismissing Tramella's growing discomfort at the situation between her and Vontavis.

Tramella turned her nose up. See a dumb ass like him could be casual when he was pretending to be a damn daddy! Vontavis is mine and I don't want nothing or no one coming between our relationship! Tramella thought as she fully intended to get to the bottom of what had her son's attention.

Chapter Twenty-One

Ain't this some shit! Tamekia thought to herself pacing the door in front of Mickey's office. If was her first day out of shadowing and she'd already fucked up! Tamekia was well aware she was supposed to follow protocol and fill out all kinda damn forms reporting the incident but fuck that shit.

Ain't no muthafuckin' way she was getting written up or fired from this otherwise easy ass job! Cassie was right when she said the job was a cakewalk. It was. Tamekia thought she would be disgusted tending to old people's personal hygiene and sometimes changing diapers, but after getting those first few checks with a little overtime in the mix, Tamekia felt like she could change a dirty diaper in one hand and eat fried chicken in the other. At the same damn time! She didn't give a fuuuck!

The following day after arriving in town, Tamekia had been introduced to Tramella and let's just say this. On SIGHT she knew Tramella was a fraud ass bitch. The way that hoe was staring down at her with those long ass teeth looking like she wanted to lick her from the rooter to the tooter! Big ol' Lisa Leslie ass looking wench!

What got Tamekia was how they had her cousin Cassie just snowed. Tamekia shouldn't have been surprised. She loved her cousin to death but she was straight from the burbs and anything Cassie thought was "hood" she was all over.

Tamekia met Sharquita and Prenisha that night also, they were cool but dumb as hell too. Off top Tamekia felt like Tramella had all these dumb hoes in a damn cult or some shit. BUT since her cuz had run it all down to her she played the shit cool, laughed along and Tramella's ol' bull daggin' ass must have fell for it. Shit, she was cool, giving her overtime and had already said she may have some opportunities for Tamekia to make extra money so she could really get on her feet. Tamekia, of course, was down.

Tamekia also planned to stay ready so she wouldn't have to get ready. That little mousey Mexican who was always at the front desk was packing up to leave for the day. Tamekia was impatiently waiting

in the lobby for Cassie, but the old man who fell out of bed while she was trying to get him settled before she left for the day was kind of on her mind. It wasn't her fault; his legs were shaky as hell and the transfer belt she'd been trained to use slipped down his frail, thin body.

Tamekia had managed to get him up and in the bed but it was still fuckin' with her head. She didn't want to be known for dropping old people on the floor! *They gon' have to miss me with all that shit*, Tamekia thought looking out of the front window. She was waiting on Cassie to get off work. They had a little routine in place where they'd come to the main office in the morning where Cassie worked as well as to drop KJ off since he was in the same vicinity. Tamekia would then take the car for the day to go see her clients. Tamekia couldn't deny, Tramella had hooked it up so that the four clients she visited daily were in the area since she was new in town and learning her way around. Tamekia truly felt like she was a boss bitch the second she peeled out of the parking lot in her cousin's car every day. She couldn't wait to get her own damn car and have a true sense of freedom. That was the first thing on her list of things to get. Transportation.

"Well thank you so much for coming by." Tamekia heard followed by a boisterous laugh. The main boss Mickey was escorting a white man in a business suit out of his office. Tamekia smiled and stood to the side. Mickey's face wasn't all that, but he more than made up for it with his body, he appeared to be in excellent physical shape, stood about six feet, two inches tall and the few times she'd seen him was always dressed in a flawless designer suit. The cologne that emanated from him as he breezed past had her nose wide open and her clit jumping. *Damn, I need some dick bad if I'm over here eyeballing old niggas,* Tamekia thought to herself. She made a conscious decision since she'd been in town to steer clear of men. She had to work on getting her shit together. The situation she'd just escaped from still had her spooked. Nah niggas and fuckin' were last on the list. Her head was content with that decision for now. Her pussy damn sure wasn't.

"Well hello, there young lady. How are you?"

Tamekia looked up and Mickey was smiling down at her with straight white teeth, with the exception of the lone gold tooth dangling in his mouth. *This old-school player nigga right here,* Tamekia thought.

"Hello," Tamekia said smiling up brightly at him.

Mickey felt his dick start to come to life as his eyes grazed over the young CNA's round backside. He'd been enamored with the latest hire from the second he set eyes on her. Mickey was trying to keep his

hand out of the candy jar as far as his employees went but what harm could it be being personable? After all, they stressed a sense of family as one of their core company values.

"Step into my office, young lady. I've been wanting to speak to you," Mickey said walking towards his office.

Tamekia was a bit taken aback.

Damn, please don't tell me they already knew old man Arthur had fallen on her shift. Tamekia walked into the office her legs shaking so bad she felt like a newborn calf taking its first steps.

"Have a seat," Mickey said waving her toward the loveseat in his office. Tamekia eased down and folded her legs over one another. Mickey sat down right next to her.

"So, I hear you came into Chicago like a bat out of hell from the 'Sip'"

Tamekia's eyes widened. What the hell does he know about me? she somewhat nervously thought.

"I sure did? Have you ever been there," she replied coolly although she was getting anxious as fuck.

"Of course! Been through a few times. Some of my people live in Alabama. I've visited the gambling boats. I used to go there when I needed to get away and slow things down. So are you adjusting to the job? Everyone treating you good? If not, my door is always open. I want to make sure you're happy in every way." Mickey spoke directly to her full DD cups breasts because that's exactly where his eyes were…until they slowly made their way up to her face. Tamekia was looking at the old player with renewed energy. Oh this nigga wants me *happy*, happy I see, she thought to herself, somewhat scheming. There was no mistaking the double entendre. It wasn't hard to spot a nigga who wanted to fuck. But this was an old nigga with some change who wanted to lay up. New rules applied.

"I sure appreciate it. I mean I have my cousin here but other than her, she's all I have. I just want to get settled down and be happy. Avoiding bullshit at all costs. Please excuse my language. I just want to be honest," Tamekia said batting the thick mink lashes adorning her eyes. It was a good thing she had on her cutest pair of scrubs and even those had a hard time containing all her ass and thighs.

Mickey leaned back licking his lips as their eyes met.

"I can definitely understand that."

Tamekia took that opportunity to stand and flex on this old nigga knowing her wide ass was going to be directly in his line of vision, pussy print of full display.

"Mickey, I appreciate you taking the time to check in on me. Not many employers care about what's going on with the people below them, but I can see you're different. I hate to cut this short but I see

the time and I know my cousin is in the lobby wondering where I am. I don't want to keep her waiting or make her late picking up her son," Tamekia said looking down at him. Mickey's eyes were pinned to her round ass. Wait a minute. One of those muthafuckas was not moving! Did this negro have one glass eye or some shit? Tamekia thought peering down inconspicuously.

"Okay darling, that must be hectic, but do the right thing and make sound decisions and you gon' be blessed with a car of your own. Believe that."

"Oh I hope so," Tamekia said putting some extra bounce in her walk. She knew her jiggling ass and bow-legged stance had this old one-eyed nigga mesmerized as she walked out of the office.

"Oh, girl there you are! I was wondering where you were. What were you doing in Mickey's office?" Cassie asked once she immediately spotted Tamekia coming out of Mickey's office.

"Girl, I was out here waiting for you! He came out and saw me and asked me back just to see how I was liking the job and how it was going for me so far. He's a really nice old man. Very respectful," Tamekia said as they exited the building.

Tamekia could feel it in her bones. Things were looking up for her in Chicago.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Three Years Later

"Cassie, baby, I can't even put into words how proud of you I am," Franklin Pierce said looking over his family around the dinner table.

Almost four years ago he'd thought he'd lost his only child to the street life for good. But God showed up and showed out in his family's life. Little KJ was the light of his life. Franklin had eventually come to see what a blessing his child's unwanted pregnancy had been. KJ was sent to bring them all together.

"Baby, this meal looks delicious!" Mr. Pierce said to his wife.

"It sure does," Cassie chimed in looking over the spread of tender pot roast, roasted red potatoes, and asparagus. Even KJ had his attention on his food instead of playing around.

"Now, baby, I looked over all the papers you sent over and I think you're right on track. You'll have that degree soon but with your on the job experience at Morning Star, what about you keep going? Nursing is an excellent field to be in, don't get me wrong, but it is hard work. While you're young and still have the energy, why don't you stay in school and get that master's degree? Think long term. Nurse management. Get the education so that when you want to be a supervisor, no one can say you don't qualify because you don't have the education. That's what happens you know. You can have all the experience in the world, but not having that piece of paper can hold you back," he said stuffing a potato into his mouth.

"You know what Daddy you're right. I've been giving it a lot of thought. I'm going to meet with an advisor to see what I can work out. I mean I wish I could get it done faster and go to school full-time…"

"Well, why don't you?" Cassie's mother said.

"I just have so many responsibilities now Mom. The car is paid off but now I have a mortgage. I have a lifestyle now that I want to maintain. So I can't do that with no job. Plus everyone at Morning Star has been so good to me," Cassie said. It was true. Things could get hectic at times but she felt like a real member of the team at

Morning Star. In three years Cassie was basically running the billing department. Dealing with Medicaid and private insurance companies. She worked side by side with Tramella. She loved it. The money and the perks were great. Everyone was doing great, even her crazy cousin Tamekia had been doing good.

Tamekia laid back in the bed trying to catch her damn breath. It had been three solid years and this old one-eyed nigga's dick was still going strong. Mickey rolled over and gave her a sloppy kiss.

"That pussy good than a muthafucka. We gon' have to talk."

"About what?" Tamekia rasped.

"Now look I put your ass in a Lexus, had Tramella let you take over that townhouse Cassie moved out of and put all the furniture up in here. Gave you a good lifestyle…,"

"Wait a minute now Mickey…," Tamekia said raising up on her elbows both of her heavy breasts exposed, "…Don't make it seem like I don't go out and work every day too! I don't like the tone you're taking. I work hard. Don't act like you just let me live for free now, nigga," Tamekia spat. She was heated.

"Calm the fuck down!" Mickey growled grabbing her 26-inch weave yanking her head back. Tamekia cried out in pain.

"You're forgetting who the fuck you're talking to. Bitch, you know damn well those little eight hours a day you're clocking ain't getting you shit. I pay for this pussy. And I gotta fuckin' problem if I think for a second you lettin' another nigga up in this snatch. Now, this gon' be the last muthafuckin' time I tell you to keep your legs closed, do you hear me?" Mickey said tightening the grip he had on her hair.

Tamekia winced in pain. She'd just gotten a fresh sew-in yesterday and it was tight as hell. Her scalp felt like it was on fire right now. Tamekia reached over to slap Mickey's back. Praying it would cause him to release the grip he had on her hair.

"Do that shit again. You know that just makes my dick hard. Do it again," Mickey said laughing. He did ease up on his grip.

Who was going around telling her damn business is what she wanted to know? Hell yeah, she fucked other niggas from time to time. What 23-year-old woman wanted to be laid up with an old nigga 24/7? Plus Mickey did things for her yes, but it was at a price. It's not like they were publicly dating each other or that she was his woman. Mickey just wanted to control her. If this old man really thought he was going to hold his hand over her pussy warding off other niggas he had another thing coming! Sometimes she wished she'd never fucked with his ass.

“Fix me up a steak before I leave out. And some eggs too. You know how I like it,” Mickey said grabbing her remote and relaxing back in her bed.

Tamekia got up to shower and rolled her eyes. It wasn’t like she could say much about it, after all, he paid for it but still. Tamekia felt trapped. How the fuck I’ma get rid of this old nigga and still maintain? Part of her thought about just dealing with the situation as is but fuck that. It got old going out alone. Mickey seriously expected her to sit in the damn house waiting on the times he could come by. Meanwhile, he was all over town wining and dining hoes. Hell, even Tramella had a set dinner date with him twice a week. What the fuck was that all about? Hell speaking of Tramella, Tamekia had been trying to entice her fine ass son Vontavis for three damn years! That fine muthafucka Vontavis wasn’t giving her no play. Tamekia had pulled out all the stops when she attended Tramella’s gatherings. Wore the most form-fitting bodycon dresses. In the summer she wore the shortest of shorts, and in the winter the tightest leggings. Fat ass pussy print on full display Nothing.

Tamekia had been demure and overt in her pursuit of the young thug’s attention. At this point, she wondered was he on the down low? Had to be!

Let me get in this damn shower and cook this man some food so his ass can go home, Tamekia thought turning on the water.

Cassie laid in the bed watching cartoons with KJ before her mind started to drift. Damn was this what her life had come to? Cartoons and the only man in her life was her son? That was okay to a certain extent but damn. She’d been single for a few years now. Yeah, she’d gone on some dates and kicked it with a few of them for months at a time but they always did something to remind her of Kerron in some way.

Also, Cassie was coming to find out she really had to watch herself as of late. Niggas were trying to come up for real out here. Life was good and these men out here were being straight homeless-sexual – they were trying to beat homelessness and every damn thing else. The last thing she wanted in her life was a man who thought all he had to do was lay pipe and spend her hard-earned coins.

Cassie spied the invitation her father had given her to a fancy gala in two weeks. It was the annual Black Business Expo. It highlighted all the burgeoning Black-owned companies in Chicago. It was a huge event every year. Black tie the whole nine. Her father had even offered to treat her to a new ball-gown and a day of beauty on him for

all the hard work she was doing.

Cassie was hesitant at first, she didn't have a date. But maybe she could meet someone worthwhile if she attended? The only male she was taking care of was the one she pushed out. Real talk. Cassie's phone buzzed and she looked at it. Then there was this negro. Vontavis.

"Open the garage I'm outside." ~Tav

They'd gotten themselves in a weird place. Cassie didn't know how to describe it. All she knew is that as much as she complained about other men, it was mainly because at the end of the day, they weren't Vontavis. Something had to give. Somehow, she felt like she'd gotten placed in the friend zone but the way she often caught him looking at her made her feel like there was more. It was so confusing.

"KJ, Vontavis is here to see you."

"YAY!" KJ yelled jumping up and running downstairs with her quickly on his heels to open the garage.

She pressed the button on the garage and stood there as it raised and Vontavis pulled his car inside.

"What's up Y'all?" Vontavis said walking up and picking KJ up. It was a weird habit that had been going on since KJ was a baby and he still loved it. They horsed around a little bit before he came in the kitchen to see what Cassie was doing.

"Vontavis, you sure know how to make your way over here when it's dinner time. I find it rude as hell. Especially since you ain't putting in on my grocery bill," Cassie said through pursed lips.

"You're gonna bust my balls every time you see me ain't you? And you a damn lie," Vontavis said pointing to the empty small jar next to the cookie jar. "You know damn well I leave you money in that jar. Now if you choose not to use it, for whatever your crazy reason is, that's on you. Matter of fact, every week it's emptied out so what are you doing with the money?" Vontavis asked.

Cassie pursed her lips and looked away avoiding his heated gaze. There it was again. The look from him that was so not a friendly look.

"I put it in KJ's college fund. He's up to six thousand dollars."

Vontavis broke into a wide grin.

"Good girl. Leave me the account number."

Cassie just laughed. Vontavis was weird as fuck. But he did break her off money. Did nice things for her and KJ over the years, holidays, birthdays even little weird holidays no one ever thought of or celebrated. She just didn't understand why he wasn't trying to be her man? After three years, Tramella even knew they saw each other, even though she viewed them more like siblings and considered Vontavis to be like an uncle to KJ. As far as Cassie was concerned he was like a father since Kerron wasn't on the scene.

“How long are you staying today?”

“Why?”

“Because I may leave and go get my nails done or something,” Cassie said. Today was just one of those days she couldn’t be around Vontavis and pretend she didn’t feel anything more for him when she did. Hell, she’d only minutes before bemoaned the fact she was still single after all this time and was making plans to attend an event to hopefully meet someone nice.

“You got your nails done yesterday. Lying ass.”

Cassie’s mouth dropped.

“How do you know?”

“Well for one, I do have eyes. For two, you posted that shit on ya’ IG.”

Cassie was completely shocked.

“When did you get on the ‘Gram?”

He started laughing.

“I been on there the whole time,” Vontavis said prying open a bag of chips. “Cassie, after all this time, why does it shock you that I keep up with you? I know what you’re up to. At all times. Just because I don’t do shit when you feel like I should doesn’t mean I’m not around. And sometimes I’m doing things for you, you don’t even know I’m doing. You’re a free woman. You can do as you please. For now.”

“What does that even mean, Vontavis? I’ma let you stop doing this to me. You know how I feel..,”

“I’m not stopping you from doing anything, Cassie. If you don’t want me here on my terms. All you have to do is stop letting me in. It ain’t like a nigga is breaking in.”

“Whatever Vontavis, I’m going upstairs. KJ already ate but feel free to give him something if he asks.”

“So damn, you ain’t gon’ fix us nothing hot to eat?”

“No, Vontavis, if you want a woman to fix your meals, you’re going to need to get you one,” Cassie said leaving the kitchen. She was at her wit's end with dealing Vontavis and she knew she was just keeping it going by allowing him to even come around. *Vontavis is just going to have to see KJ at his house if he really cares about maintaining a relationship with KJ*, she thought stomping up to her bedroom.

Vontavis made himself a thick ham and cheese sandwich and walked out to the family room to join KJ.

“What are we watching little man?”

“Black Panther,” KJ said.

“Okay then,” Vontavis said leaning back in the sofa and acting like he hadn’t already seen the movie at least fifty times. His mind was really on KJ’s mama who was upstairs pouting in her room. Fuck. Cassie just didn’t understand all the pressure he was under.

No matter how much he tried to get her to see how Tramella really was, Vontavis was at the point where he left it alone because Cassie went hard for Tramella. Which was exactly how Tramella wanted all the women at Morning Star to do. She wanted them to worship her. And they did. The only females that didn't fall under Tramella's spell were ones she intentionally kept at bay because she saw a weakness in them. She, of course, treated all the girls nice, but they weren't all "family" or calling her "Auntie". A few fell through the cracks and ended up in the same position as Schenay, then there was the rare hoe who saw through Tramella. In Vontavis' mind, the wisest hoe of the bunch right now was Cassie's tramp ass cousin Tamekia.

Vontavis couldn't stand her scandalous ass though. Every time he ran into her she was in his damn face. He never wanted to be outright rude to her, but he did ignore her. Acted like he didn't see her obvious hoe tactics but that bitch came on hard. Like she was a dude. Vontavis couldn't really say anything because no one knew about the situation he had going on with Cassie. Yeah, they'd only had sex once, but it had made a lasting impression on him. But he'd always saw her as more than that, so sex wasn't necessary between them as far as he was concerned. Besides, he had Chrishanna for that. And truth be told, she was driving him fucking nuts trying to get him to commit to her. So he'd recently cut her completely off. So much stuff just had a nigga stressed the fuck out.

Three years ago he'd all but dropped off the scene. Unbeknownst to anyone, he'd gone into a serious depression after killing that old man. Just watching the news every day and looking online to make sure nothing came up or the man's death wasn't being investigated was exhausting as hell. The few times he'd brought it up to Tramella, she blew him off. Well, that was easy as fuck for her to do…she hadn't killed Mr. Barnes. He had.

"KJ, stay right here and watch the movie."

"Okay, daddy,"

Vontavis's heart clenched. KJ had been calling him that lately. He was getting older now and he thought perhaps he was hearing the other kids at daycare talk about having a daddy. So he wanted one too. Vontavis didn't mind it at all but when Cassie first heard the exchange she'd become upset for her son. Feeling like she'd failed as a mother not giving her son a complete family.

"I'll be right back," Vontavis said making his way upstairs to check on Cassie, he knew she was beyond frustrated with him and rightly so. But Vontavis was so close to having everything the way he wanted it to be so they could finally be together, the last thing he wanted her to do was lose faith in him. To give up and find another man who did and said all the things to her he knew she was waiting for him to say.

Cassie was laying on her bed with her Kindle reading.

Vontavis peeled off his shirt and walked over to the bed.

"What are you doing Vontavis?" Cassie stammered.

"Coming up here to kick it with you for a little while," Vontavis said taking the Kindle from her hand and laying it on the nightstand.

Vontavis looked down at Cassie. Tiny shorts, baby-tee, hair up in a ponytail and fresh-faced. A total package to him and he was growing tired of being without the one female he really wanted. Vontavis just didn't know if he could get her away from his damn mama. Vontavis already knew he wasn't the type of man her parents would go for and he'd never even met them. But he knew they weren't going to stand in his way once he really stepped up. The issue was Cassie acted like his mom was her lifeline and she couldn't be without her. The connection between them had only grown stronger in the last three years.

"Why are you just staring at me like that?" Cassie asked.

Before she could say another word, Vontavis had crawled on the bed in between her legs. Cassie tried to buck him off of her but she wasn't moving a solid 230lbs off of her. After she stopped being mad, her hands did what seemed natural to her and she began to caress his muscular back. Before she started to weep.

"Why do you do this to me Vontavis?"

Vontavis lifted his head from the crook of her neck and looked in her eyes.

"Stop crying," he said wiping the tears from her eyes but they continued to flow.

"You make me feel so stupid, Vontavis. I don't even know why I even think about you," Cassie sobbed.

"You think about me for the same reason I think about you three years later. Stop acting like you're the only one in this. You know I don't come over here just for KJ," Vontavis said pressing his lips to hers.

Cassie tried to weakly resist but he licked her lips and lightly nipped her lips with his teeth until she gave in and hungrily kissed him back. Cassie could feel the log between his leg growing and she wanted it inside of her. It had been so long since she'd been touched and even longer since she'd been with the only man she could honestly say she'd wanted since Kerron.

Cassie ground her slight hips under him creating a heated friction between them. Her pussy grew wetter by the second. Of all the days for him not to have on sweatpants! These jeans have to go. Cassie reached down to unzip his jeans so she could at least wrap her hands around his fat dick when Vontavis grabbed her wrist.

"Now isn't the time," he groaned out, his voice was ragged. Vontavis wanted to be inside Cassie so bad he was almost shaking.

Cassie wanted Vontavis so bad she didn't care anymore her pride could go to hell right now.

"Vontavis just be with me. Please, I know you feel what's between us. I know you do," she begged. Cassie couldn't stand the thought of all these other women having Vontavis and she couldn't. She'd been given a taste of the best dick of her life and to only have had it once? Yet he was around her all the time. It just wasn't fair.

"I do wanna be with you, Cassie. I just don't know if you knew the real me would you still want me. You want who you think I am, and who you want me to be. I want someone who takes me just as I am," Vontavis said rolling off of her and onto his back. His heart was thudding and his dick was harder than Chinese arithmetic.

"You won't give me a chance! How are you going to know how I feel about anything if you never tell me? I want the whole cake and you're giving me crumbs. Vontavis you're not giving me anything, but you give me just enough that I'm over here holding out waiting for you to make this real between us. You bring your ass over here at least three times a week. Just enough times for me not to want anyone else here. Do right by me or just stop coming over here Vontavis. I can't take this shit anymore. We've been playing this game for three years. It's fucked up and manipulative."

"Okay, Cassie, you want us to really be together? Quit that job and let's move. Let's leave the state, me you and KJ. Tell me you'll go and I'll have us out of here in a week," Vontavis said slowly.

Cassie jumped to her knees looking down at him on the bed.

"Are you crazy?"

"A little. Why?"

Cassie was bewildered. These were the types of things that came out of his mouth periodically. It was pure madness to her.

"You give me nothing to go on Vontavis, but you want me to leave everything I've worked hard to get? I have everything going for me right now. But you want me to walk away from it all to be with you just like that? I'm in school, my family…Tramella?"

"What does Tramella have to do with your life, Cassie?" Vontavis shouted.

"I told you day one to keep your distance from that woman but you just won't listen. Your parents are going to always be there whether you live in Chicago or somewhere else. All your material shit, I'll replace it. They have good schools all over the country. Tramella's opinion on what you do means nothing. See, I'm telling you what I want and what I need but you never listen. It all comes down to a woman you met four years ago. Tramella is my mama. If I feel the way I do, Cassie don't you think there's a reason for it? Goddamn. I've known her all my life."

Cassie sat there more confused than ever.

Vontavis wasn't very forthcoming on a lot of things with her, but the one thing that remained consistent with him was his stance on his mother. Maybe he was listening to rumors about Tramella? Cassie was more confused than ever now but in her heart, she knew she was supposed to be with Vontavis. She wanted them to be a family. They already were, as makeshift as it may be. Cassie's cell-phone rang and she grabbed it and saw it was Aretha calling. She quickly sent her to voicemail and dropped the phone.

Vontavis's cell-phone buzzed in his pocket and he pulled it out.

Speak of the devil and she shall appear. It was Tramella. Vontavis held a finger up to his lips to quiet Cassie as he answered the call placing it on speaker phone.

"Yeah?'

"Nigga, where are you at? I got an issue I need you to handle for me ASAP!" Tramella ran off at the mouth.

"What's going on?"

"I need you to get on over to the rental and toss Schenay and that little-retarded ass son of hers out tonight! I want everything that hoe got in my rental out on the street."

"Tremella, that is a woman with a child. I am not about to put her out on the street. And why would I anyway? I picked up her rent check last week. She always pays her rent."

"I'm not accepting that muthafuckin' rent from her ass. I'ma say you didn't get shit. I already filed some papers to get that bitch out. NIGGA WHY AM I EXPLAINING MYSELF TO YOU? DO WHAT THE FUCK I SAID DO!" Tramella screamed.

Cassie sat there with her jaw dropped. She knew Tramella could be a bit crass at times, but throwing someone out in the streets for no reason?

"And rough her ass up too. I wouldn't be opposed to you breaking a bone! Call me when it's done," Tramella spat.

Cassie's hand flew to her mouth to contain her gasp. She looked at Vontavis with wide, wild, confused eyes.

Vontavis slipped his phone back into his jeans.

"Cassie, what do you think I do for Morning Star?"

Cassie rose from the bed holding her waist. Her stomach was in knots.

"You beat up women? I'm so confused right now," Cassie said shaking her head.

"This is what the fuck I've been trying to tell you, Cassie. Since the day I laid eyes on you. Tramella can't be trusted. She is not a genuine person and you need to start watching your back. It may not be clear to me right now, but she's using you for something."

Cassie stood there looking Vontavis.

"Can you answer my question Vontavis? Are you going around beating up women? Throwing children out on the street?" Cassie asked her voice quavering.

"I have in the past. But I haven't done anything like that in the last three years," Vontavis answered trying to be as honest as he could be. To an extent. There was just some shit you had to take to the grave, and while you were living pray for forgiveness. Vontavis dropped to his knees the second he opened his eyes in the morning and before he got in the bed at night.

"Look, I don't have to say this needs to be kept between us. Just knowing the little I told you could get you hurt, Cassie. I'm not playing with you." Suddenly Cassie's eyes turned to distrustful slits and Vontavis immediately noticed the scowl on her face.

"Cassie, please don't look at me like that. This is one of the reasons I didn't want to say anything. I just wanted you to open your eyes and look around you. Everything that glitters isn't gold. You shouldn't have needed me to tell you that baby."

Despite everything that had just been revealed to her, the small term of endearment made her heart skip a beat. Cassie knew Vontavis was thuggish, she thought maybe he sold some weed on the side. She'd noticed on the official Morning Star paperwork his title was Director of Transportation. He even had a little office in the building but he was never there. Someone else totally ran that department. Morning Star had several vans in which they used to transport clients to medical appointments and shopping. It was something they then either charged the clients for or Medicaid. Cassie had signed off on those expenses thousands of times.

Vontavis stood up and grabbed his shirt.

"Look, I'ma go ahead and go. I know you got a lot on your mind right now. So let me just let you process the shit. Just don't look at me any different, please. I deal with enough of that as it is on my own. I know I don't say it but coming here with you and KJ is the only real break I get from my fucked-up ass life. I kinda hate I just ruined it. But you're in my face pressing me about how I feel and what I want and talking like I don't care about you when in reality, I care about you and KJ more than anyone in this world. If you make me choose Cassie, I'ma pick you over anyone. But you have to be content with the nigga you get. My past and my present. I may not exactly be the man you wanted, but I promise to always love you, and KJ, I'll be faithful and loyal to you, and our family will never want for anything. I give you my word on that. You just have to take me as I am," Vontavis said his voice raspy. It was the most he'd ever uttered about how he felt about her in three years. Cassie was shocked and humbled by his confession.

Cassie rushed over and threw her arms around his waist.

Tamekia stood at Cassie's front door knocking. Now this hoe know she called me over here to come watch movies tonight. I'm not waiting in the car either, Tamekia thought to herself as her right foot rapidly tapped against the ground.

She had called Cassie twice in the last five minutes and Cassie hadn't answered the phone. Of course, she was only over here because it was Saturday night and since Mickey was keeping close tabs on her right now, she was laying low. Tamekia dug around in her purse and pulled out her emergency key.

Once she was inside she saw KJ in the family room watching a movie. She leaned down and gave her little cousin a kiss on the cheek.

"KJ, where is your mama at?"

"She's upstairs."

Tamekia made her way up the stairs. Hold the fuck up. Is that what I think I'm hearing. Oh shit! Now I can tell when a bitch getting' her back broke! This hoe ain't even tell me she had a little cuddy-buddy. Go head on cousin! Tamekia was tempted to take a peek to see it all go down. Unlike herself, she knew her cousin was getting broke off with some young beef! Let me stop, she thought to herself turning around then she paused. Let me just take a peek!

Tamekia tiptoed back towards Cassie's bedroom door and put her hand on the doorknob, Tamekia tittered to herself holding her stomach laughing. Nah I'm busting this door wide open.

"Hey girl!" Tamekia said throwing the door wide open to find none other than Vontavis busting her cousin wide open! Jesus the anaconda between his legs was slick as hell as he pulled out of Cassie's pussy and turned around.

"Bitch! Get the fuck out of here," he growled walking towards her, dick swangin'.

"I'm so sorry! Oh my god. I didn't mean to interrupt," Tamekia lied, unable to take her eyes off his dick as Vontavis pushed her out the door. Tamekia stood in the hall in complete shock.

"Oh, so this is what Cassie been over here doing? With the nigga, I wanna fuck! When this nigga leaves I'ma have to get the real tea on what's going on with this!" Tamekia mumbled to herself as she made her way downstairs and sat with KJ for another thirty minutes before Cassie and Vontavis emerged from upstairs.

She watched him come to say goodbye to KJ and it was clear as hell that KJ was very comfortable with Vontavis. The situation she walked in on today obviously had been going on for a hot minute! I

wonder how long? Tamekia mused.

Cassie walked into the kitchen where Tamekia was patiently waiting for every last drop of this piping hot tea.

"Okay, first of all, give me my extra key back. That was for emergencies only and me not answering my cell phone right away does not constitute an emergency. Especially since you're two hours early," Cassie said as she held her hand out for her key.

Damn this bitch really gon' take it back it huh? Tamekia dug around in her purse and begrudgingly handed over the key.

"Now Tamekia, this should go without saying, this is my personal business and what you saw here today goes no further than these walls okay? Not a word to anyone. This is serious. I don't want anyone in my business and no one knows about us. There really isn't an us, to be honest with you," Cassie said sliding down in a chair. "And bitch, I'm mad as hell too. That was our second time having sex in three years and you gon' bust in my room like that fuckin' up the vibe," Cassie said folding her arms across her chest and cutting her eyes at Tamekia.

Second time in three years? She's a damn lie! That dick looked too good. Let me near it and I'm taking the dick all day, every day, Tamekia thought. *That nigga got full range of my mouth, pussy, and asshole!* Tamekia looked at Cassie skeptically. Cousin or not, this girl lying. Gotta be!

Chapter Twenty-Three

The Black Business Expo was tonight and Cassie was standing on pins and needles, anxious about who she might possibly meet tonight. She'd gone to these events when she was a teenager, but since going through all the drama with Kerron, she hadn't been to the expo in years. She was definitely out of the loop on a lot of happenings in her father's business inner-circles and all of the hifalutin, uptight, bourgeois Black folk he hung out with on a regular.

It seemed like she'd nervously crossed and uncrossed her legs a hundred times in the short time she'd been sitting at the table. Cassie had, in fact, forced herself to go to the event tonight. It had been three weeks since she'd laid eyes on Vontavis since Tamekia had interrupted them. Three weeks since he'd revealed to her what an unscrupulous person Tramella actually was and he'd ghosted her. Again. Cassie was done.

How could he just leave her like that again? After everything, he'd said to her. Now she was at work nervous as hell about being anywhere near Tramella yet having to fake it for the safety of her and KJ. It dawned on her just how tied up Tramella was in her own life. She'd willingly allowed Tramella to run certain aspects of her daily life. Now she had to wonder if she pissed Tramella off, were her and KJ going to be out in the street? She just didn't know what to do.

Perhaps the Schenay lady actually did something to warrant Tramella's wrath that day? Cassie was at a loss. But now here she was nervous as hell and Vontavis was nowhere to be found.

"Hello, would you like to dance?"

Cassie heard from above her. She looked up absently into a pair of deep-set brown eyes framed with long lashes and an engaging smile. He was a nice-looking guy and his suit fit him to perfection.

"Sure why not?" Cassie said smiling up at him. She'd come out tonight to expand her horizons and meet someone so there was no sense in sitting at the table all night like a wallflower.

"I'm Keenan Abrams. You're Cassie Pierce correct?"

Cassie was a bit taken aback the handsome stranger knew her

name.

"Do I know you?" she asked hesitantly.

"No but I feel like I know you already from hearing your father speak so lovingly about you," he said twirling Cassie around the dance floor.

"Oh, so you work with my Dad?"

"Yes, different departments but he's a big deal. I've always thought of him as a mentor. Are you single Cassie?"

"Straight to the point I see. Yes, I am Keenan," Cassie answered swallowing a lump forming in her throat. Her heart didn't feel single. It was aching for Vontavis but it was time to set all thoughts of him aside. We spent the remainder of the evening talking, dancing and drinking champagne. He wasn't Vontavis but he was a nice distraction Cassie had to admit. Keenan even introduced Cassie to several of his co-workers. Cassie had to admit it felt nice to be shown off. In three years, Vontavis had never even attempted to see her outside of her house. She realized she'd just met Keenan but she knew this was what it meant to be a couple and date. Kerron wasn't much, but she had to confess even he knew how to at least date. Vontavis came across as a person who was socially awkward. At the end of the evening, Keenan walked her outside to the limo she'd come in with her parents and they'd exchanged numbers. Cassie wasn't sure if he'd actually call her but it at least felt good to know that he'd asked.

Monday morning was hectic as usual but when Cassie got back to her office after lunch she was smiling from ear to ear. The was a knock on her office door and in walked Tramella.

"Umph! Those are gorgeous Cassie! No wonder I haven't been able to catch up with you all weekend. Now tell Auntie who's sending you flowers?" Tramella asked nosily bending down to inhale the scent of the two dozen red roses that had been delivered a few moments ago. They were from Keenan. She'd just hung up the phone thanking him for the flowers and he'd asked her out to dinner on Friday. She, of course, said yes. After meeting him, she wasn't sure he was actually going to call her but the following day around noon he called and they'd chatted for hours.

Cassie sighed loudly and pasted a fake grin on her face.

"Well you know I went to the Black Business Expo Saturday night and I met a guy. He's pretty nice."

"You must have gave the nigga some of that wet-wet to be getting all these damn flowers! Gon' tell Auntie…you fucked him didn't you?" Tramella asked lecherously leaning forward licking her lips. Cassie

didn't know just how she'd excused this behavior before but it was downright inappropriate!

"Actually my panties stayed on Auntie! He did ask me out to dinner for this Saturday night though and I'm going to go. I'm tired of being alone and I'm not going to meet anyone just sitting in my house all the time," she sighed

"That is true! It's been a while since we met, I honestly was starting to wonder if you were a lesbian," Tramella said nonchalantly looking at her nails.

Cassie's eyes bucked.

"Auntie, what would give you the impression I was a lesbian? I mean not that there's anything wrong with that but what kind of vibes are you picking up? No disrespect, but your gaydar is all the way off over this way," Cassie said sucking her teeth. First off, why the hell is she wondering about me period? That's what really had Cassie fucked up!

Tramella's lip curled up devilishly.

"I mean I know some women experiment after a painful breakup. I thought you might be one of those types. You have to admit your single period has lasted a long time. Now, where is Tamekia's ass at? I wanted to talk to her about doing some extra hours."

"I haven't heard from her today. You know she's hard to keep up with ever since she got that new car," Cassie said booting up her computer. She had some last-minute invoices that needed to be submitted to the state before the end of the week.

"Okay, I'll get up with her. Now you made sure to sign off on everything right? Those quarterly invoices need to be submitted no later than 4 pm Friday. I'm going for a late lunch with a new honey-dip I just met!" Tramella said standing up to her full Amazonian height.

"Is it a man or a woman?" Cassie asked casually never looking up from her computer.

"Who said I was gay?" Tramella damn near growled.

"I mean, I haven't heard about you dating anyone either Auntie! So I thought maybe you had a bad break-up and were "experimenting" you know, like how you said I might be," Cassie replied snidely.

"Touché' niece! Touché'. Nah this is a whole nigga," Tramella lied. It was 2018 and she had no idea why she was still hiding her sexuality, but for some reason, she really didn't like people in her business like that. She was well aware there were rumors about her liking women. But they were going to stay just that. Rumors. Tramella was going to Queen Latifah people to death. She wasn't confirming shit! Any hoe bold enough to try and confirm anything was going to catch her hands and her size 12 foot up their ass!

Chapter Twenty-Four

Tamekia pulled her 2013 Lexus unappreciatively into the parking lot of the liquor store. She'd just gotten done with her last client of the day and needed something to sip on to relax her nerves. The last few weeks she'd started to hate this damn car. It was in great condition, but for all the pussy and dick sucking she had to do with Mickey in order to get it, why wasn't it the latest model? Then to add even further insult to it all, a week ago she'd discovered Mickey had a GPS system installed on this raggedy piece of shit! She'd creeped over to this nigga's apartment she met at the mall one day named Damon. She wasn't in his apartment 15 minutes before Mickey started blowing her phone up asking her who she knew at that address. She couldn't believe how old niggas were acting these days.

When she first got started messing with Mickey, she was sure all she was going to have to do was let him sniff the pussy one to two times a week and he'd be good. Nah, this nigga acted had the stamina of a 21-year-old and had nerve enough to be possessive. When was this nigga gon' just have a damn heart attack and die?

Tamekia was also now green with envy towards her cousin since discovering she was, in fact, fucking Tramella's son Vontavis. Cassie was a goddamn lie talking about that was her second time giving that nigga some pussy in three years. Nawl bitch! That's how Cassie was moving up at Morning Star, by breaking off ol' boy some pussy. Why the fuck was she stuck fuckin' the old one-eyed nigga? It wasn't fair. I mean Cassie was pretty in the face, she'd give her that, but Tamekia felt like she had a better body to go along with the face. Not to mention she felt foolish. She'd been throwing herself shamelessly at Vontavis from day one. The nigga was exhibiting signs of loyalty toward her cousin too, which further fueled her jealousy. Tamekia could only imagine how they laughed behind her back.

Tamekia's cell-phone rang and she immediately frowned when she saw Tramella's name. What the fuck this big-foot ass heffa want?

"Hey, Auntie! How are you?" she purred through the line rolling her eyes. She hoped Tramella wasn't trying to talk too long because

she was in a sketchy part of town and didn't just want to sit idle in the lot. Tamekia had made it her mission to find her way around Chicago and considered herself damn near an expert. She thought Sharquita and Prenisha were dumb as fuck but they did hook her up with a lot of people. She knew the best spots to get everything done from her hair to her feet.

"I'm good boo, but Auntie needs you for a huge favor and you know when Auntie needs a favor I ain't leaving you out in the cold. This is going to mean plenty of money for both of us!"

A bitch like Tamekia was already sitting up straighter in her seat at the word money!

"You already know I'm in! Whatchu need?"

"Well you know I do parties on the side right? Back in my heyday, I used to dance."

Tamekia held her hand over her mouth so a laugh wouldn't escape. Tramella wasn't a bad looking woman but she was what Tamekia liked to call a handsome woman! Who was paying Tramella's big-foot ass to hop around and dance? Her feet had to be every bit of a size 14! Did they even make high heels in that size?

"Well back home I did dance a little but look, Auntie, if I do this, I don't want Cassie all in my business okay?"

"Oh, I already know baby! Cassie ain't about that life. Have you met Jatori? Y'all gon' go together. So I'ma text you her number and don't worry. Now that it's confirmed, they about to send me the payment. Y'all come right on in the office in the morning and get this extra change!" Tramella crowed.

They hung up and Tamekia ran inside the liquor store excited as hell. She needed this extra money. If Tramella could throw some extra coinage her way, it was good for her in more ways than one. Tamekia could get rid of Mickey's cheap ass. He gave her money but she had to account for every dime. Plus she was tired of fucking with him. Tamekia still hadn't figured out how she was going to do that and still keep her job. Shit, maybe she might meet a baller out at one of these parties. Tamekia grabbed a pint of Hennessey and a few swishers to get her mind right. It had been a while since she'd danced but shit, it was like riding a bike for her. Plus the thought of shaking her ass for some young dick, already had Tamekia's twat wet.

Chapter Twenty-Five

Vontavis slowly sipped on his 7-Up and polished off his wings. He was having a quick dinner with his dad at the airport restaurant before he hopped a flight back to Chicago in thirty minutes. The airport was packed. Everyone seemed to be in a rush to get to their destinations and for once he was among them. For the first time in his life, he felt like he had something good waiting for him. He couldn't wait to get back and see Cassie and KJ He already knew she was going to be pissed. He'd taken off on her yet again but this time it was for a very good reason. Unlike the times before when he was just trying to distance himself, this time he was securing a future for them.

"Son I hope you know I did try to get you back. I tried to be in your life."

"I know you did. At first, I did think you'd just abandoned me with this crazy woman but the older I got, I saw my mama's ways. Plus I saw all the paperwork she was trying to hide from me. I know you tried to come to visit me in Chicago and everything," Vontavis replied somberly looking into his father's eyes that mirrored his own. He'd been in Raleigh, North Carolina the last three weeks ironing out a few last-minute details for his family. Three weeks ago it had been a mere request that Cassie and KJ leave the state with him. Vontavis aimed to make that a reality. The second Cassie's hoe ass cousin Tamekia walked in on them having sex three weeks ago he knew he had to set shit in motion. The way hoes like Tamekia moved, he knew it wouldn't be long before she tried to expose them. If she did, there was no telling what his mom would try to do to Cassie. He had to be ready to move them to safety at a moment's notice.

Long ago Vontavis had stopped trying to have any type of real relationship. Once Tramella got wind he was spending time with a certain woman too long, she immediately found fault with her. One girl even told him Tramella had physically threatened her and since she had a child, she was not taking any chances of dealing with not a crazy baby mama, but a mama period. That was just one of many instances. So it wasn't as if he'd never wanted anyone special. It just

wasn't safe for any woman to be too close to him.

"Dad I appreciate you taking the time to help me get some things settled here before I make the big move."

"You know I'm more than happy to help," Charles Jones said looking at his strapping young handsome son. There was a hardness in his son's eyes he didn't quite like. He could tell he'd been through some things in his short life and guilt was eating him alive that he hadn't been around to help guide his only son.

"Okay well, I'm going to head to my gate, Dad. Once again, I appreciate all your help and I'll be here as soon as I can wrap things up back in Chicago. I'm looking forward to this new start."

"Well, I can't wait to meet your young lady and your son," Charles said.

They said their goodbyes and Vontavis headed to his gate to board his plane and claim his family.

It was after midnight when Vontavis crept into the house. He carried his duffle bag up to his room and within seconds his door flew open and Tramella was standing there with a cigarette dangling from her lips.

"Negro where the fuck have you been? Now, this shit is just getting out of hand! This ain't no goddamn hotel!"

"Okay and I ain't no goddamn child. So what's your point?"

Tramella's eyes widened and she lunged at him with her arm raised. Vontavis quickly pushed her against the wall gripped her around her neck and lifting her up. Tramella was gasping and trying to kick her legs but it was for naught because she was damn near as tall as me.

"You know what mama? You're going to start keeping your hands to yourself. Do I make myself clear?" Vontavis said before he let her go.

"I can't believe you would put your hands on your own mama!" Tramella said rubbing her neck and gasping for air.

"You only want to be my mama when it's convenient for you. Just pretend I wasn't your son just now," Vontavis sneered.

"I just don't understand what's been going on with you lately, Vontavis! Ever since that incident with ol 'man Barnes. Ain't no one worried about his old ass! Things have been going good for us for years, Vontavis. Don't I make sure you have plenty of money? I know you be fuckin' these lil pissy ass hoes around here. We live in a nice house. Our cars are paid for, what else could you want? Just tell mama what you need and I'ma make it happen. But you ain't been

pulling your weight just staying gone like you've been doing."

Vontavis just looked at her. His mama looked pitiful as hell. Did she really think this was a life worth living? Being her lap dog? Killing people? Throwing women and children out on the street? Nah, he had enough and he wanted more.

"You know what? I'm leaving. I was gonna stay here for a few more days but I'ma go ahead and leave tonight." Vontavis grabbed another suitcase out of the closet and started throwing shit in. He couldn't sleep another night under a roof with this lady.

"Well, your dumb ass will be back! When your money is dried up you'll be back. Big, black ass nigga you. Dumb ass. You think you can live on your own without me? I'd like to see you try it. This gon' be funny as hell. Ain't nobody gonna put up with your crazy acting ass but your mama! You'll see. And this ain't no damn revolving door either!" Tramella said stomping out of the room. I could hear her still talking shit.

"Mickey, Vontavis is over here acting up! Put his damn hands on me and everything! You better talk to his black ass!" Vontavis heard her yelling on the phone.

He just grabbed what he could and walked out the door. Thirty minutes later he was pulling into Cassie's driveway. He called her on the cell phone but each time he was being sent to voice-mail. Now see she's acting up, Vontavis thought leaning over and reaching into his glove compartment to pull out the extra key he had for Cassie's place. Of course, she didn't know he had it, but like he'd told her before, whether she was listening to him or not. Everything having to do with Cassie he was aware of. Vontavis jogged up the steps and quickly and quietly let himself inside before something dawned on him. It was after one in the morning, but surely Cassie wasn't in here with another nigga? He stealthily opened the door to KJ's room and found him knocked out. Then walked down the corridor and opened Cassie's door.

"Now if you're sitting up in the bed why didn't you answer my call?"

Cassie sat there with her chin to her chest.

"Get out of here Vontavis! I can't believe you broke into my house. Give me that key right now and get the fuck out of here! I don't want anything to do with your ass," Cassie said jumping out of the bed and rushing towards me like she was about to beat my ass.

"Calm the fuck down. Get back in the bed I'ma pull my car in the garage and then we can go to sleep," Vontavis said walking out of the room with Cassie on his heels as he bounded back down the steps.

"Negro, didn't you hear me say get out?"

Vontavis acted like he didn't hear shit she was saying and hit the

garage opener.

Cassie couldn't believe he thought it was okay just to walk in and out. The past three weeks had been hell for her. The last time she'd seen Vontavis, he'd been ordered to throw a woman and her child out on the damn street! Had he done that and worse? She had no idea. Then he created all this mistrust in her mind about Tramella and then just disappeared. Cassie didn't know if she could trust Tramella now or not. She hated feeling like she was walking around on eggshells now. Cassie had felt so secure about how everything was going in her life three weeks ago then Vontavis pulled the rug from underneath her then left. Again.

Vontavis opened up her car door and grabbed her garage door opener. Goddamnit! He looked back over his shoulder at her smugly before he jumped in his car and pulled in. Cassie was so mad right now she felt like crying. If that happened there was really going to be a scene because they wouldn't be tears of sadness but those of pure rage. Vontavis grabbed a duffel bag from the car and tried to walk in the house but Cassie was blocking the door.

"Does it not matter to you that I don't want you here?"

Vontavis paused before pushing past Cassie.

"I mean…, not really. I know you're mad because I've been gone but I had a good reason. Can we talk about it in the morning though? I'm sleepy and I missed you guys," Vontavis said covering his mouth and stifling a yawn.

"I can't stand your ass!"

"Tomorrow Cassie. I don't want to hear that shit tonight."

Vontavis walked back into Cassie's bedroom, walked into her bathroom and turned on the shower. Cassie stood there seething. Where the hell had he been? She climbed back into the bed and 15 minutes later Vontavis was walking out with a towel wrapped around his waist. Cassie was trying not to even look at him for more than a few seconds at a time. She was moving on and looking forward to her date with Keenan this weekend.

"I do not want his dick no more! I do not want any of that bomb ass dick!" Cassie repeated silently in her head over and over with her eyes squeezed shut.

"Cassie? What the hell is wrong with you? Since when did you start talking to yourself?" Vontavis asked looking at Cassie like she'd officially flipped her muthafuckin' wig.

Her eyes flew open and narrowed as she pinned her stare on him.

"Look, you've bombarded your way in here for tonight…,"

"Nah baby, I'm staying with you until we get out of here."

"Like I said! You're here for tonight but you need to take your ass to the guest bedroom."

Vontavis sucked his teeth loudly.

“Cassie you got me fucked up. What I look like on a twin bed? You really don’t wanna sleep with me?” he had the nerve to ask sounding confused. Cassie sat there watching him make himself at home in all of her toiletries, he was rubbing her scented shea butter all over his body. His chocolate skin was gleaming. Cassie could feel herself growing wet just looking at him. Get it together bitch! She thought to herself.

“No, I do not! Don’t just assume you can walk in here after three weeks and get sex from me…,”

“Oh nah girl, you really tripping, I’m for real sleepy right now! No dick for you tonight. Let a nigga get a little rest. I’ve been ripping and running for the last three weeks.”

Cassie looked at him with her mouth open. The cockiness was unreal!

Vontavis glanced over at Cassie and back down to his dick.

“Baby girl needs it tonight man, gon’ head and wake up. Look how testy she is.”

“You can keep that raggedy ass dick I don’t want it anymore.”

“Cassie stop playing with me. You know this dick ain’t raggedy!” Vontavis said slipping his bare ass between her sheets.

“I’m serious. I have a date this weekend too,” Cassie said. She hoped he understood the fact he was just too late this time.

“Cassie turn the light off please before you really piss me the fuck off. You ain’t got shit this weekend. I’ma tell you what you have. Yo’ ass got me and KJ this weekend. That’s what the fuck you have. Period,” Vontavis grumbled before he turned his back to her and closed his eyes.

Cassie reluctantly turned off the light and laid down sighing loudly pulling the covers up to her chin. How the hell was she supposed to sleep knowing her greatest temptation was only inches away from her. She’d be lying if she said she hadn’t missed him.

“Cassie?”

“What?” Cassie replied annoyed as hell.

“I missed you and KJ while I was gone.”

This time it was Cassie who turned her back.

Chapter Twenty-Six

Aretha was on pins and needles waiting on Kerron to come into the visitation room. The lawyer had called with good news this morning stating there was a possibility that Kerron would be released from jail early with time served for good behavior. Evidently, some of the charges weren't sticking. Thank you, Jesus! My baby has been locked up in here long enough.

Kerron limped into the visitation room visibly hurt. Aretha jumped to her feet.

"Baby, what are they doing to you up in here?" Aretha yelped tears leaking from the corners of her eyes. She knew her son was too handsome to be in jail. These gay for the stay niggas loved turning out yella niggas!

"Mama just get me outta here. I don't think I can take much more of this," Kerron said his voice cracking.

Aretha was scared to ask but she had to. If Kerron wasn't going to come out and tell her, she was just going to let his lawyer know her baby was in here being abused. Aretha leaned forward.

"Kerron baby gon' tell mama the truth, are these niggas in here fuckin' you in the ass?" Aretha asked her voice trembling.

"Not yet but goddamn mama! I'm fighting every day to keep these niggas off me! Some nights I don't get a wink of damn sleep up in this muthafucka' and please excuse me because I don't mean to disrespect you by cussing but a nigga is tired! I be walking around here basically not showering or even wiping my ass good. I only shower on the days you're coming to visit," Kerron said. Aretha could see the black rings around her son's eyes. Lord help her baby.

"Well good news! I spoke to the lawyer today." Aretha went on to tell Kerron about the latest update from the lawyer and told him to be expecting a visit from him to discuss the details before his next court hearing.

"In the meantime baby, I think you need to see about getting in solitary confinement. I really do. The last thing we want is you getting' got right before you're able to get out. You know what I

mean?" Aretha asked with a raised eyebrow.

"You might be right mama. I've been holding off because when you do that these niggas tend to either think you're a sexual offender or snitching. But I'on give a fuck at this point. What's Cassie been up to? Have you seen my son? She hasn't taken any of my calls lately, I ain't got no new pictures of my son or anything."

"Don't even speak that bitch's name around me Kerron! I hope you find someone else when you get out of this mess. You need a woman that's ride or die! Loyal to the very end and that little red bitch just went on with her life while you've been in here rotting away suffering," Aretha sobbed.

Kerron sat there thoughtfully a few seconds before he spoke.

"Mama I know you ain't trying to hear this and there have been times while I've been in here I was bitter too but that's my son's mother and I can't do nothing but respect her. I wasn't being good and treating her the best when I was free. So why should I expect her to have been riding this time out with me when I got locked up? Cassie was going to work, paying the bills. I should have been a better man. It ain't her job to just stay getting treated dirty. I accept that. But any nigga she with when I get out of here better be ready to step aside because I'm coming to get my family back," Kerron said confidently. Honestly, he didn't even want Cassie to know when he was getting out. He wasn't even looking his best right now. Some niggas got locked up and seemed to flourish physically. Kerron, on the other hand, had lost weight, he couldn't even stomach the nasty food they served in here. He didn't know how these niggas could stand to eat this slop. He'd been surviving off the limited amount of food he was able to buy in the commissary. He couldn't wait to get out of here and get back to normal.

Tamekia breezed into the Morning Star offices on cloud nine! Last night had been the easiest thousand dollars she'd ever made. And she got dicked down too? Hell nawl! I gotta stop fuckin' with Mickey's ass. Nigga always got me laid up fuckin' to the Commodores and the O'Jays and shit. I mean that was okay for an old nigga but last night she'd gotten her pussy ate out by the smooth sounds of Tekashi 6ix9ine!

Pussy got that wet, wet, got that drip, drip
Got that Super Soaker, hit that, she a Fefe
Her name Keke, she eat my dick like it's free, free

Goddamn, that nigga Shimone's tongue was long as fuck! Tamekia had rode that nigga's tongue to the beat of the song until she creamed all in his mouth. By the time she was done, that nigga's face looked like a hot glazed Krispy Kreme donut! Matter of fact, she planned on swooping by his place for another quick dick down before she went to her next client's house. But she wanted to swing by the office first and grab her coins from Tramella.

Tamekia walked inside the building and waved to Maria at the desk before walking down the hall to Tramella's office. She wanted to get in and out. The last thing she wanted was for Mickey to see her and hold her up talking or trying to fuck when she was trying to get over to see Shimone. Tamekia lightly rapped on the door.

"Come in!" Tramella called out.

"Hey, Auntie!" Tamekia cringed inside every time she said that shit but hey if it made the old bull dagger feel good about herself? Oh well!

"Hey boo! I heard good things about last night! Do you think it went okay?"

"Of course! I mean a few of the niggas tried to be a little touchy-feely but ol' boy looked out for us. Who is this Julio?" Tamekia asked.

Tramella sucked her teeth loudly and tooted her lips.

"Now niece you know damn well I ain't sending my girls into the wolves den with no protection! Julio is part of the team. He packin' too in case any of these animals get too rowdy. I take care of the family!"

"All right now! I love it, Auntie. Well, I just came to grab my money before I go to Mrs. Franklin's house.

Tramella pulled open a drawer and grabbed a white envelope out and passed it over to me smiling, her gold tooth was gleaming. I grabbed it excitedly and counted it out. Six hundred dollars? What the fuck was this? I'd done the same amount of time in clubs back home and walked out with a little light 1k. This was chump change.

"Uhh Tramella I don't mean to sound rude or ungrateful but what is this six hundred dollars? That party had at least sixty niggas and the only chicks dancing were me and Jatori," Tamekia asked my eyebrow raised.

"Well, I can't tell. You sound ungrateful as hell to me right now," Tramella said through pressed lips. "If you were going to trip about the amount you were going to get paid from the job Tamekia, you should have asked how much the pay was before you went. I would have gladly told you. Shit, if it was 60 niggas in the room and you didn't walk out with a thousand or more on your own, whose fault is that? You should have cashed out with every last one of those muthafuckas! But right now you sound like you're trying to accuse me

of something," Tramella ground out through narrowed eyes.

Tamekia exhaled slowly. The last thing she wanted was problems with this big bitch but this would be the last time she got over like this on her again.

"You're right Auntie."

"I know I am!"

"Okay let me get to Mrs. Franklin's house. I'll talk to you later," Tamekia said giving her a grin, she even showed a few teeth just so Tramella didn't think she was trying to be funny. Tamekia walked out of her office fuming though. Now if, and I do mean if Jatori and her got paid the same amount, exactly how much did Tramella make off of them? That's what the fuck she wanted to know? That was some quick easy money but shit Tamekia wasn't trying to have no damn pimp! She could trick her damn self.

Shoot, these days everyone needed a side hustle, Tramella had just planted the seed and she was damn sure about to make sure it grew. Tamekia pulled up Shimone's number in my phone.

"Wassup girl were you at?" Shimone asked sexily.

"Damn nigga I heard your voice right now and my pussy got a heartbeat!" she purred.

"Well hurry up and get your fine ass over here."

"Give me ten minutes," Tamekia said hanging up the phone.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Cassie walked back into the house and dropped her keys on the table. She'd just come back in from dropping KJ off at the daycare and had run into her office to grab several stacks of files she needed to work on from home today. She couldn't lose time working but she really wanted to be here so she could talk to Vontavis about getting the hell out of her house. She needed to express to him exactly how serious she was about him leaving her alone. Last night had been torturous for her. She hadn't gotten a wink of sleep. Hell, less than that when at one-point Vontavis pulled her into the spoon position and rendered her immobile for the rest of the night.

"Good morning," Vontavis said bounding down the steps and walking straight into the kitchen and opening the fridge.

"Are you hungry Cassie?" he asked.

"If you're cooking I am. You distracted me all night so I'm working from home today. I didn't get any sleep."

"Really? I slept good as hell. I didn't even get to say bye to KJ this morning. You should have woke me up. Is that your work laptop?" Vontavis asked.

"Yeah, why?"

"No reason, just asking. Vontavis stated. There was no reason to get Cassie's paranoid ass all nosy and into what he was doing. All she would do was ask him a million questions that she didn't understand and his patience right now with everything he was trying to do was paper thin. Cassie walked into the kitchen and watching him whip them up a quick delicious meal. They sat at the table silently eating before Cassie finally spoke.

"Vontavis, where have you been these last few weeks?"

"I was in North Carolina. My dad is down there. I needed to take care of some business. So how long do you plan on being mad at me this time?"

"I'm not going to be mad at you at all. I just don't want you period. You're not the type of man a woman can settle down with. At first, I used to think maybe it was just me. But I honestly think you're

probably like this with every woman you meet. I don't think you have it in you to do much more than fuck and I need way more than that. So does my son. So I laid there all night deciding that there was no sense in being mad. You can't have expectations from people who just don't have it in them to know how to treat people right."

Vontavis sat there feeling stuck. It wasn't the first time he'd heard a woman tell him something along those lines but this was the first time it was coming from someone he did actually care about. Cassie was so far off base in her assessment of him it was laughable. But he wasn't in the mood to laugh. He wanted to cry. If he was the crying type which he wasn't. If she knew all the shit he was preparing to do just to keep her and KJ safe. To start a family with her without having to look behind their backs all the time.

"So that's how you feel about me, Cassie? I just ain't shit huh?"

"You said it. Not me. KJ loves you…,"

"But you don't?" Vontavis asked his eyes meeting Cassie's, she quickly looked away.

"I learned a long time ago it doesn't make sense to tell people how you really feel. Most niggas don't really care anyway. They're only asking so they know just how far they can manipulate you and play games. When are you leaving Vontavis? You can stay again tonight to spend some time with KJ but then you have to leave. Being around you isn't healthy for me," Cassie said firmly. She had to put her foot down with Vontavis once and for all. Cassie stood up, cleared the table and headed upstairs to take a shower. The way Vontavis was staring at her was unnerving to her. She didn't like the fact he always seemed closed off and secretive. Cassie climbed the steps wondering if she'd been too harsh on Vontavis. He'd been around since KJ was a baby now he was three years old. Though she could never totally depend on him, he was always showing her he was around. He always did nice things for her and KJ. They were like an unofficial, secret family. Why though? She was tired of pretending and waiting for him to want more. If left up to Vontavis they would continue on this way. Cassie didn't want to spend her whole 20's chasing a man who was never going to be hers. Honestly, she felt like she was putting up with way more mentally from Vontavis than she ever had with Kerron and they had a child together.

Cassie walked into the bathroom and turned on the shower before she stepped inside and let the hot, steaming water beat down on her body. Vontavis walked into the bedroom and heard the shower going. He really needed to clear some things up with Cassie so they were on the same page for once, but when he saw the outline of her body in the shower his mind turned to other things. Vontavis quickly shed his sweatpants and walked into the bathroom opening the shower door

and slid up behind her.

"Vontavis! Get out…,"

"Cassie please just shut up sometimes. I be trying not to disrespect you but sometimes you just talk too goddamn much. Is this how you dealt with KJ's daddy? Because I'ma whole new breed of nigga. You gon' have to learn to just shut up sometimes and follow my lead. And yes, sometimes just do what the fuck I say do. When I lead you the wrong way, then you can say something. Until then just let me be your man. I got you."

"Nigga, first of all, I think you're crazy," Cassie balked.

"Okay, I already told you before I was. But as long as I'm crazy about you and your son. What does it matter? Why is that a bad thing?"

Vontavis began to massage her breasts, fondling them with his long thick fingers. Instinctively, Cassie leaned back onto his chest and reached behind her to find his long, thick rod. Cassie could hear his sharp intake of breathe when she wrapped her hand around his muscle. Vontavis turned her around and captured her soft lips with his, Cassie kissed him back fiercely, if this was all he was going to give her of himself, she wanted it, even if it was for the last time. Their lustful moans began to echo through the walls of the bathroom as they kissed, Vontavis turned Cassie around in front of the wall then gently bent her over at the waist. Cassie bent over, reached between her legs and spread her pussy lips. Vontavis lined his dick up at her entrance and proceeded to run the fat head of his dick over her slit, the water coupled with her natural slickness had him ready to bust before he was even inside of her. Cassie screamed out his name before he put them both out of their misery and slowly eased himself inside of her. She moaned as he started pumping faster. Vontavis reached down to her firm, dangling breasts while stroking in and out. He teased her nipples while massaging her breasts, feeling the warm water spraying on them as he continued to pound into her, over and over. Cassie moaned loudly as she bounced her small ass back hard against him as he moved his hands to pull her hips tight to his pelvis as he shot his load into her tight pussy.

They both stood there looking at each other panting heavily before Vontavis cut the water off and quickly swooped Cassie into his arms and stepped out of the shower. He gently laid her on the bed and laid down next to her. Cassie felt like she was on cloud nine but it would only be momentary because he was going to leave again. He always left her.

"Cassie I'm staying here with you until we leave but I don't want anyone to know this is where I am."

"What do you mean we? Vontavis I already told you I'm not

moving…," Cassie sputtered. Here he was talking crazy again.

"Cassie when I tell you to leave you better be packed and ready to go or you're leaving all this shit behind."

The doorbell rang and Vontavis looked over at Cassie suspiciously. His eyes narrowed before he jumped up from the bed naked as a jaybird and walked out of the room. Cassie had him all the way fucked up! Plus she was talking about going out on dates and shit. She could get a nigga's throat cut if she wanted to.

"Oh My God! Vontavis! Put some clothes on answering my damn door."

"Your ass is supposed to be at work so who the fuck is ringing the damn doorbell in the middle of the day anyway? Awful funny you happen to be home today," Vontavis sneered. Cassie was tying her robe around her waist when he swung open the door dick swinging and none other than Kerron's mama Aretha was standing there. Her eyes were wide and her mouth was open.

"You're too old to be selling girls scout cookies, love! Are you a Jehovah's witness? We don't want any of those books. Baby, we're getting a no soliciting sign for this door," he said looking back at Cassie.

Aretha hadn't seen a dick that looked that good in ages! JESUS! No wonder this young hoe wasn't taking her son's phone calls. If she was over here laid up with this young buck she wouldn't be accepting any damn calls from a jailbird either.

"Young man, I'm an elderly woman! Don't you think you need to put some clothes on answering the door like that?" Aretha finally managed to choke out even though her eyes hadn't left his dick yet.

"Come on now. Your pussy might have some miles on it but you ain't elderly. So I know you've seen dick before. Baby, you know this lady?"

Aretha tooted her lips taking that as a compliment.

"Vontavis get your ass upstairs! Oh my goodness come in Aretha. How did you know where I stay at?" Cassie said rubbing her hand nervously through her hair.

"What kind of den of iniquity do you have my grandchild over here living in Cassie Pierce. Now it's bad enough you ain't even taking your man Kerron's calls but to find out you're over here laid up with this young buck…fine as he may be!" Aretha said all the while walking around Cassie's place nosily checking everything out. Cassie could see her little beady eyes landing on everything. Vontavis came back down the stair this time with his sweatpants and a t-shirt on.

"Now that I threw a little something on, how are you doing ma'am. I'm Vontavis," he said extending his hand to the older hood rat. He thought Tramella was bad but when you were a hood rat with no

money there was a vast difference. His own mama seemed almost classy compared to this woman.

Aretha pursed her lips at the young tatted up thug, truth be told he could have stood in front of her naked all damn day! She was enjoying the show but she needed to handle some business with this whore Cassie. Aretha cleared her throat.

"Well Cassie look, I was coming over here to let you know since you can't seem to be bothered. Kerron is supposed to be getting out in a few weeks. Now, do you think he can come over here to stay with you once he's released? I'm trying to set my baby up for success once he gets out! I figured if he could put this address on his parole papers and I'm working on finding him a job…or a least someone who will lie and say Kerron is working for them. I'm trying to make it so my baby can get out on solid ground. This is the least you can do for Kerron after the way you've abandoned him. Don't think no one knows that you were all in on him dealing drugs as long as it benefited you. You just don't know what my baby is going through in there," Aretha said her voice cracking.

The room was silent, all eyes were on Aretha and she was soaking up the attention.

"They bustin' that ass wide open in jail huh?" Vontavis asked breaking the silence. Cassie wanted to fall through the floor! Who told him to add his two cents in!

"Look, Aretha, I realize you're trying to get Kerron set up for when he gets out, I really wish you luck with all that but it has nothing to do with me. I don't even understand why you're even asking me when he can just stay with you," Cassie asked bewildered.

"I'm on the verge of eviction my damn self! You think I'ma tell those white folks that and risk them not letting my son out? I talked to Bontrice to see if he could go over there but she shut that down right away. That damn Gerron won't ever go against her either. So now here I am scrambling around trying to make shit happen," Aretha said ruefully.

"I'on know why you're stressing. All they gon' do is send his ass to a halfway house. He'll be all right," Vontavis said.

"Excuse me, this is family business. I would appreciate it if you would keep all your big dick comments to yourself," Aretha yelped.

Vontavis sniggered loudly before he stood up and got in Aretha's face.

"This is my family you're over here trying to involve in your punk ass son's bullshit. My fiancée' and I don't give a fuck if your son did make him, that's my son. In three years your son ain't sent a birthday card at the very least and ain't none of his people dropped a dime to help her take care of him. Get your ass outta here with all this ol'

bullshit. That nigga better not darken this muthafuckin doorstep without calling. You better not bring your loud-mouthed ass around here again either," Vontavis spat. Cassie jumped up to push him out of a now trembling Aretha's face.

Aretha grabbed her neck breathing heavy.

"You wait until I tell my son's how you spoke to me! Wait until my son gets out of jail! You gon' pay for disrespecting me, nigga!" Aretha yelled walking towards the door.

Cassie apologized profusely. Aretha got on her nerves but she didn't agree with Vontavis speaking so disrespectfully to her. And since when was she his fiancée? And KJ his son? Vontavis's cheese had most definitely slid all the way off his damn cracker.

"Man baby boy's people are crazy as fuck. I'on want none of their asses around Y'all no more if I ain't here."

"That's the damn problem Vontavis! You're never here! And since when am I your fiancée? "Cassie asked hands on her hips.

Vontavis and Cassie stood there glaring at one another.

"Cassie do you want to be with me?"

"I can't trust you…,"

Vontavis ran his hand over his head in frustration, annoyance was etched all over his face.

"Cassie, why do you keep saying that? What the fuck have I lied to you about? We talked the last time Cassie and I thought we'd come to an understanding that we wanted to build on something. Yeah I took off, I told you I had to handle some shit but I'm handling things that have to do with us. I'm securing things for you, me and KJ. You act like I'm out here fucking everything moving and I'm not. Baby, I promise you I'm not.

I'm doing shit you don't even know about to be the best man I can be and Cassie I'm winging this shit like a muthafucka because I've never been in a relationship before. But I'm trying because it's you and I ain't going through all this for no other woman but you. But what don't you trust? You trusted that nigga Kerron and what did he ever show you that made him so deserving of all your trust but not me?"

Cassie stood there blinking back tears. She didn't want to just walk blindly into the unknown with Vontavis. She had a son to think about. She had to put his happiness and security before her own. Vontavis just wanted her to listen to everything he said no questions asked and she had to be smarter than that. She had to be able to go off of more than empty promises and occasional great dick.

"You have all these demands but you don't have any answers to my question. It's all about you huh?" He said, "Don't you have work to do? I'm going upstairs Cassie, you're giving me a headache."

“You’re not leaving?” Cassie asked her voice trembling.

“Cassie I told you I was here for you. I have plans for us but if you don’t want to take a chance on me, I can’t force you. I want to start my life over with you and KJ but I can’t stay in Chicago and do that. I just can’t, I feel like I’m drowning here. I’m ready to finally be happy too.”

Vontavis’s cell-phone rang and he pulled it out of his pocket. He looked at his cell phone and quickly answered as he walked past me going upstairs to my bedroom.

“Wassup girl you good?” I heard him say.

See? There he is talking to females on the phone and he wants me to place me and my son’s life in his hands? No way.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Tramella sat in her office gleefully going over all the case files Cassie had signed off on and sent over to her to submit to the state. Cassie always diligently did exactly like she said and this month had been no different. It was late Friday afternoon and the main offices of Morning Star had closed hours ago. Mickey had even taken his black ass home talking about he had a date. Mickey really had the nerve to think these young hoes out here were really "dating" him. Using him was more like it. All a dumb muthafucka like him could do is line these young hoes purses with cash and gifts. She understood a person had needs, hell she had to get her nut too, but she'd be damned if she tricked off some money to any bitch she fucked with.

Tramella looked through all the files and chose six client billing folders she'd picked out. Mickey didn't mind a little padding of the charges they submitted to the state, they had well over 100 clients so a few extra charges always flew under the radar, but Tramella was growing increasingly annoyed. Every month she felt like they were leaving thousands of dollars on the table. This month, she'd decided to do a little experiment of her own. Tramella inflated the charges on six client accounts grinning deviously the entire time. She already had the extra money spent in her mind.

Vontavis sat at the table with a blank zip drive plugged into Cassie's work computer. They'd had a rough day and he still didn't know if he was getting through to her. Whether she left with him or not, he knew once he left Cassie was going to be in immediate danger. He loved Cassie even though he couldn't form the words to tell her. She was smart, but at the same time, she was gullible to a lot of things. The second Tramella had moved Cassie into the office a few years ago he knew it wasn't for her book smarts. It was because Tramella thought Cassie was gullible and could be easily manipulated. His mother would never invite her hood-rat cousin Tamekia to work side by side

with her in the office. She had motives and Vontavis intended to find out why. Maybe he could at least try to keep Cassie out of trouble in the event he had to leave the state without her. It was the least he could do for her and KJ. The last thing Cassie would ever want to do was see the side of Tramella she refused to acknowledge. Vontavis looked down at the computer and the transfer was at 99% when he heard the garage open. The second it completed he pulled the zip drive out and stuffed it inside his pocket before KJ burst through the door screaming his name the second he saw him.

His stomach clenched at the thought of KJ's bio dad coming on the scene and fucking KJ up. He could already foresee the broken promises and disappointment the little boy would experience. Even Kerron's mama was a raggedy piece of work. Kerron jumped into his arms and they rough-housed for a few minutes before he instructed the little boy to run into his room and grab the basketball so they could go outside and play.

Cassie watched them together and her heart melted but she knew the feeling would be fleeting. Vontavis never took into consideration that she wasn't the only one who asked for him when he disappeared. Cassie had to field questions from an impressionable three-year-old who thought the world of him. So it was her responsibility to not only protect her heart but her son's.

Cassie was still shocked to find him in her house after this morning. She walked into the kitchen to prepare them a nice dinner. No matter how much he was giving her the false feeling of family, she knew the second the wind blew, Vontavis would be gone again.

Saturday morning came and the tension between Cassie and Vontavis was palpable to everyone but KJ. He was oblivious to the fact they were walking around speaking to each other in clipped tones and eye rolls. Cassie flitted around the house cleaning from top to bottom.

"You're cleaning up like you're about to have company tonight," Vontavis asked sarcastically watching her from the couch.

"KJ bring your backpack down so I can take you to grandma's house!" she called up the stairs.

"I just might have company. Don't make it seem like I never clean my home. I always keep a clean house," she sneered. "Are you really just going to be sitting here? I do have a date tonight and I don't want any problems out of you when he comes to pick me up."

"Do what you feel like you need to do Cassie. You ain't gon' do shit all night but look at that square ass nigga and wish it was me. So enjoy your little date. I might be here when you get back. Then again,

maybe I'll call someone and take her out on a date too," Vontavis quipped. Cassie's lips pulled down into a frown and she screamed up the stairs for KJ so she could drop him off. Cassie cut her eyes at Vontavis as she left the house. After she dropped KJ off, she planned to get her hair and nails done. She already had an outfit picked out. Fuck Vontavis. I'm going to finally be treated like a woman should be. Wined and dined. Kerron and Vontavis had fallen painfully short and she was beyond ready to be treated like a grown woman should. She'd exchanged text and brief phone calls with Keenan all week long, Vontavis was not going to ruin this for her.

"Okay, Tamekia I sent you the contact number and the address for the gig. It starts at ten. Now just to be clear…this is a big event tonight, is 1500 ok for the these few hours? I don't want you taking issue with me after it's all said and done. I want you to be satisfied," Tramella stated salaciously. She was only offering the young hoe this amount to butter her up for things to come. First, it was dancing but she already saw the greed and hunger in this hoes eyes. Tramella intended to fast-track this bitch to the real money team. Sending her out to her elite roster of clientele who wanted to pay for an evening of pleasure. Tramella couldn't help but wonder how this young tramps pussy tasted? She liked to taste the goods before she put them out on the shelf for customers to spend good money on. Tramella hadn't tasted good pussy since she'd gotten rid of Schenay. That bitch came talking about she wasn't gay and didn't want Tramella sucking on her pussy anymore. She had her all the way fucked up. When it came to Schenay's honey pot, Tramella was insatiable. Needless to say, she was feenin' to have some young, sweet nectar running down her throat.

"That sounds good to me. Is Jose going to be there and who else is going?"

"Well, this was a last-minute gig. So I'm sending Sharquita, Prenisha, and Jatori! It's gon' be plenty of niggas for Y'all to juice!" Tramella crowed. She was trying to hype this young hoe up because she really didn't give a fuck. She'd already arranged to be paid ten thousand to send a slew of hoes into the wolves den for the night. The money was supposed to arrive by courier in the next hour. She'd gone ahead and decided to give Tamekia 1500. The rest of their asses were only getting 500 apiece. Tamekia better be lucky she had a pretty face and a fat ass or she would have cut her off completely after she'd questioned her about money the last time.

“Well, Bryson I’m happy I was able to talk to you and negotiate a better deal for tonight’s talent! Just call Tramella and cancel. But I’ma need the money the second I walk in the door tonight.”

Bryson confirmed their new arrangements and they ended their phone call. Tramella fucked up big time when she gave her that phone number. Tamekia called it with the quickness. The last time she’d come through for Tramella and walked away with a measly six hundred dollars would be the first and last time her dyke ass would get over on her!

Ten minutes later, her cell phone rang and she smirked when she saw Tramella’s number.

“Bad news baby girl! These sorry niggas just canceled the whole gig…,”

“Damn really? I was already counting that money!” Tamekia lied holding back a titter. This old bitch dumb as hell.

“Shit you and me both!” Tramella bellowed. “Look I’ma go ahead and give y’all a hundred dollars each when I see you just for the inconvenience.” They ended the phone call and when Tamekia hung up, she roared with laughter. This bitch got me fucked up! Tamekia had brokered a deal with the nigga Bryson for half of what Tramella was charging him. She was going to call Jatori and bring her and then she was going to give that dumb hoe seven hundred dollars. Shit, it was a little more than Tramella was going to give her so she should be grateful.

She immediately called Jatori.

“Hey, girl! You see the gig got canceled. Shit that money could have paid my daycare this month,” Jatori whined before Tamekia could barely greet her.

“Chile, please. You ain’t talking about shit Get your bag ready and don’t say shit do you hear me? Not a muthafuckin’ word! I’ma come pick you up in an hour.”

“Aww shit! Let’s get this money bitch!” Jatori crowed. They’d kept in contact since the last gig they’d done together and Tramella thought she was cool enough. Dumb, but cool. Who cares though? She was pretty and had a good body. Plus she liked money just as much as she did. So it was a win-win friendship of sorts if you asked her. Tamekia made her way into the house and walked into the walk-in closet and dug around. She pulled out the lockbox she’d purchased right after she arrived and unlocked it. She opened it up and smiled looking down on the kilo of cocaine she’d skipped town with. I wonder if these niggas want a taste of this tonight? Tamekia thought calculating how much extra money she could make tonight selling a little coke on the side.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Cassie breezed into the house fresh from getting her hair and nails done. She'd even gone by the liquor store and grabbed a nice, expensive bottle of Moscato to sip on while she was in the tub relaxing before her date. Her place was nice and clean and she smiled inhaling the fresh clean scent. Cassie made her way up to her bedroom and found Vontavis laid across her bed. She couldn't lie, he was a sight to behold. This man was propped up in the bed with nothing but a pair of basketball shorts on, lean and muscular with tattoos popping on his gleaming brown skin. Cassie wanted to scream. All she wanted to do was crawl into the bed and wrap up with him. Her heart knew he was her man, but her head told her to listen to reason. Vontavis wasn't a long-term option.

"What has you so engrossed?" Cassie asked. Vontavis was all into his laptop. Cassie had long ago figured out Vontavis was more complex than she'd initially thought. There had been times when he was over the house where he would help her with her college-level assignments. Cassie had even tried to encourage him to attend college but he'd just shake his head and laugh. Which was yet another reason she knew she had to branch out and find another man who had the same life aspirations as herself. She wanted things in her life. It seemed like Vontavis, though he wasn't happy with how things were going in his life, he hadn't expressed, at least not to her, how he was going to change anything about his present situation. What good was leaving state going to do if he wasn't able to take care of himself? How were they supposed to live? She hadn't completed her degree yet or anything.

"Just looking into a few things," Vontavis said glancing up at her quickly and tittering in laughter. "You spent all that time getting that ol' titty-time ass hairdo? I know this nigga is a cornball now. You look like you're on the way to a damn prom. All that hairdo is missing is some freeze curls from back in the day," Vontavis said throwing his laptop to the side and howling in laughter.

Cassie's lips pressed into a thin line but she refused to give him the

satisfaction of a snappy retort. Vontavis was just showing his jealousy and wanted her to feel insecure about herself so she wouldn't go on her date. She simply cut her eyes at him and walked over to the dresser mirror to look at her hair. Vontavis was full of shit. Keenan was picking her up at 6 pm. She had a little over an hour to get ready.

'Vontavis why don't you go downstairs? At least until it's time for him to get here. Then I want you out of sight!"

"Nah I'm good right here," he said closing his laptop. Cassie scowled and walked into the bathroom with her wine glass and bottle in hand. She slammed the door loudly and slipped into the hot, steaming bubble bath. Music was playing and the mood was mellowing. She raised her glass of wine to her lips. Her updo didn't really look old-fashioned, did it? And what the hell were freeze curls? Cassie thought before dismissing Vontavis's nasty insult. Cassie closed her eyes and seconds later they flew open when Vontavis walked in. He looked down at her relaxing in the tub then shed his shorts and boxers. His dick sprang forward thick and lengthy and he wasn't even hard as he stepped into the tub behind Cassie.

Vontavis reached for the bottle of wine and brought it to his lips taking a long swig before he sat it back down.

Cassie didn't know what to say but she was going on this date! Vontavis reached around and slid his hands up her waist until they cupped her breasts playing with her nipples until they were hard and aching to be in his mouth. Cassie's breathing was hard and labored.

"So you're excited to go on your date huh?"

"Yeah" Cassie moaned.

His hands roamed lower between Cassie's thighs and gently spread them apart, the warm water caressed her clit before his hands made it to her pussy and spread her lips apart.

"You really think this nigga gon' treat you and your son better than me Cassie?" Vontavis whispered in her ear, his deep voice sending a shock down her spine as one of his hands rubbed and molded her breasts and the other hand played in her pussy. Cassie's head fell back on Vontavis and her eyes closed and she bit her lip as her hips slowly bucked and ground into his thick fingers, she was right on the cusp of reaching her orgasmic peak. Cassie could feel his hard dick pressed to the middle of her back.

Vontavis placed gentle, firm kisses along her neck.

"Are you still going out with this nigga Cassie?

"I don't want to but you're not leaving me any other choice Vontavis!" Cassie ground out, she was seconds away from coming. Then she felt the rug being pulled from underneath her. His hand was out of her pussy and she felt empty. He'd taken his hands from her breasts and they still felt heated from his touch. All Cassie felt was

water dripping all over her. She had a bonnet on but her hair was completely drenched. Vontavis stepped out of the tub splashing water all over. Then he turned around and bent down looking at Cassie through narrowed eyes.

"You trying to make me out to be such a sorry ass man Cassie but what about you? You're more than willing to let me make you come, use me for dick and then you gonna go out with the next nigga? Nah baby, let that nigga make you come. If he can." Then Vontavis splashed the water with the open palm of his hand making sure her new hairdo was completely ruined. Cassie hadn't looked in the mirror but knew she resembled a drowned rat.

"You lucky I don't snatch every last one of those fake fingernails off your damn hands, what you wanted your hands looking good for when they're wrapped around another man's dick?" Vontavis growled looking down at her as he wrapped a towel around his chiseled waist.

Cassie was livid!

"Go home Vontavis! I don't want you here anymore. You get on my damn nerves. You don't run me," Cassie ranted on and she scrambled out of the tub. Her pussy was throbbing she wanted to feel him inside of her so bad and she was embarrassed at how open he'd just had her only to play with her. She could hear Vontavis in the other room laughing at her. Cassie glanced at the clock but didn't have time to argue. She was really going to enjoy her date without a second thought to Vontavis's rude ass. She walked around the room applying his favorite scented lotion and perfume…for another man.

Cassie walked into her closet to pull out the black bodycon dress she'd chosen to wear for the evening when she let out a shrill scream. She flew out of the closet with the cut-up dress in her hand.

"What did you do Vontavis?" she screamed.

"I ain't do shit to that cheap ass dress. Is it dry rotted?" Vontavis asked barely looking up from the T.V. Cassie's eyes bucked and she ran back in the closet to find something else. But as she flipped through all her dresses and skirts that were suitable for a night on the town, she discovered that they were all cut with noticeable holes or a missing sleeve. Buttons were gone, you name it. Cassie had nothing suitable to wear. She even flipped through to find some of her dressier skinny jeans thinking she could get away with something cute enough for a date but they'd all been turned into shorts!

"What's going on in here?" Vontavis said standing at the door of the closet. She could clearly see he was smirking.

"I told you to stop letting KJ play with the damn scissors! Looks like he fucked up all your shit. Damn!" Vontavis said lying with ease. KJ was just going to need to take one for the team. He'd buy him a few toys for lying on him. He'd also kick out some money to replace

Cassie's clothes but if she really thought she was gon' get fly for another man right in his face? She really had him all the way fucked up.

FUCK! Cassie wanted to cry, she knew Vontavis had done all this to ruin her date but she wasn't going to let him. This nigga had literally only left one plain looking black dress intact for her to wear on her date. She was either going to look like she was going to church or a funeral. I'm still going! Cassie thought rushing into the bathroom to give her face a nice dramatic beat. She smoothed her hair up into a nice sleek bun. I'll just have to dress up this dress with some accessories, Cassie thought rummaging through her jewelry to find her gold hoop earrings, gold cuff bracelet, and a necklace to put on. Cassie was finally calming down because even though Vontavis tried to sabotage her date, she still looked like a million bucks. He was in there on that damn laptop again. Cassie put on some strappy black stiletto heels and a white cropped jacket completed her look. It wasn't exactly the look she had in mind but she still looked damn good. The doorbell rang.

"Okay, I'm gone. How do I look?

"Like shit. Don't bring your ass back in this house after midnight either or you won't be allowed back in."

"Whatever. Bye" Cassie said before she breezed downstairs to have a date with a man who knew how to treat a woman.

Chapter Thirty

"Girl I'm hyped! I hope these niggas got plenty of money to spend tonight," Jatori said turning her flask up to her lips.

"I know right girl! But let's do these little three hours and be out! Money in our pocket. Jatori, don't forget what I said, this is between us! You know Tramella booked this gig for us, but she was giving us crumbs! I called that nigga my damn self so we can get this money. Tramella getting paid and we out here shaking ass. Tramella got me fucked up!"

"Right! Like I said, I had this money spent already so you know damn well I'm trying to get paid. My baby daddy locked up too? I need all the money I can get! I know people be thinking I'm out there but on the real Tamekia, I just be trying to get all the hours I can at Morning Star to take care of my daughter. When Tramella came to me with all this little extra shit, I said why not? Hell, I used to strip in a club so this lil bit of dancing ain't shit to me."

"I feel you girl," Tamekia said pulling up to the ramshackle house the party was at. According to Bryson one of his niggas had just gotten home from jail. They were throwing him a party and needed a few women to spice it up. They both checked their makeup and pulled and tugged on their outfits. Neither of the women wore anything that actually covered their breasts and all of their ass was out in the tiny pairs of shorts they had on. They hobbled up to the door and rang the bell. A few seconds later the door swung open.

"Hey is Bryson here?" Tamekia asked all business. The man eyed the two scantily clad women lustfully before he called out for Bryson. Tamekia folded her arms across her chest and leaned against the doorway.

"Hey Wassup girl? You're Tamekia right? Okay, Y'all look good enough."

"I know we do!" Tamekia yelped. "So where can we talk privately to handle the money?" Tamekia asked. She wanted to handle that privately and put it in her car before they even went inside. Before she could lead him away for a private exchange, he opened up his goddamn mouth.

"Okay so I know we agreed on five thousand dollars…,"

“What?” Jatori barked “You’re paying us five thousand dollars for this gig? Bitch why you tell me my cut was only seven hundred dollars?” Jatori asked through narrowed eyes. “Bitch you got me all the way fucked up. It’s one thing for Tramella to try and pull this shit, I figured as much with her, but bitch who the fuck do you think you are trying to get over on a bitch? I’m out. Bitch come let me get my shit out of your damn car so I can go the fuck home!” Jatori shouted making her way back down the driveway. She was already on her phone.

Tamekia teetered after her on the broken concrete, her feet were already killing her in the cheap heels.

“Jatori! Come on now girl! I was gonna tell you about all the money but I had to make sure they were actually gonna pay it first! If I was really gonna lie I would have come without you to pick up the money. Come on bitch I need you! We already here, let’s get this money girl!” Tamekia pressed hoping her lie sounded convincing. This nigga Bryson had fucked up her entire plan. She wanted to do the money exchange in her car privately well away from prying eyes. Especially Jatori’s!

“Nah, I’m good love. Enjoy. I don’t trust your bitch ass. You can miss me with the bullshit boo. You must have really thought you were Tramella huh? Nah baby. You got me fucked up. Wait until I tell her too.” Jatori said smirking at Tamekia.

“Jatori come on now. You gon’ make me lose my goddamn job!”

“Good! That way I don’t have to cross paths with your fraud ass.” Jatori spat grabbing her bag out of the car, right in front of the house she opened the bag and pulled out a pair of leggings and a loose t-shirt and put them on all out in the open. Then pulled out her cell phone and called herself an Uber.

“What about your daycare bill?” Tamekia threw out grasping at straws. Shit anything to make this bitch stay.

Jatori busted out laughing.

“You stupid bitch. My daughter goes to daycare at Morning Star. How much do you think I have to pay? Little to nothing. And anything I DO have to pay; Mickey’s ass handles that shit for me. What? You thought you were the only CNA riding Mickey’s old ass dick? Hoe my rent paid too!” Jatori spat through narrowed eyes.

Bryson was looking down the driveway at the spectacle before him. Damn! They were one hoe down by the looks of things.

Tamekia stomped back up to the house.

“Where is your girl going?”

“Fuck her! I’m bad enough to get this party started all by my goddamn self, run me my money nigga!” Tamekia said mad as hell especially since she knew once Jatori ran her damn mouth, she was

going to be out of a job come morning.

"Well look, one hoe wasn't even the deal. So if it's just you, I got a thousand dollars. Period."

"What? That was not the deal!"

"Shit ever since you called my damn phone after I had plans all set with Tramella mind you, it hasn't been the deal I wanted. I had it set up to have four bitches shaking their asses for me and my niggas! Then you called talking about two for half the price. Then from the looks of it, you tried to pull a fast one on your partner over there, look her damn Uber is here! Now here we are down to just you! Nah, girl, you can get this one thousand or me and my boys can move this party to the strip club." He said hotly.

Tamekia was cringing inside, but she knew after tonight, a bitch like her was gon' need this little bit of money more than ever.

She held her hand out to be blessed with the cash and walked on inside. Bryson showed her to the bedroom with an adjoining bathroom where she could freshen up. The music was bumping she had to admit. Future blared through the speakers and Tamekia, pulled her personal vial of cocaine out of her purse so she could get her mind right for tonight's activities.

Jatori settled into the Uber and looked around. Thank God she had a good driver tonight. She quickly opened a bottled water and grabbed a granola bar after exchanging pleasantries with the young college-aged White dude. Then she grabbed her cell phone and scrolled to Tramella's name, initiating the phone call. Yeah, she could have just let the shit go. But nah, this country hoe was gon' learn you did not want to fuck with Jatori Adams.

"Jatori baby what's going on? Are you okay?"

"Not really Auntie Mella, look I need to tell you about something and I hope you're not too upset with me because I had no idea any of this was going on until I got to the spot!" Jatori sat on the phone giving "Auntie" the rundown for a good thirty minutes before she hung up the phone. Of course, she left out all the parts where she was going along with it at first. But Tamekia would have to prove that shit and she couldn't. As soon as she hung up, she called her girl Schenay. They'd been cool since she'd started over at Morning Star but about two weeks ago Schenay had called her to catch up. She most definitely had to give her the complete rundown of tonight's shenanigans!

Tramella rose up in the bed after listening intently to the story the young hoe ran down to her and by the time she was finished, she was seething mad and ready to fuck some shit up. She had wondered why

Bryson had called back so quick to cancel the dancers coming over tonight and to find out it was a hoe she's been good too? Damn good. Aww hell no. She had to make an example out of this country hoe! She didn't give a fuck if Mickey was laying the pipe to this bitch or not. Tramella immediately called Sharquita and Prenisha, she told them to get their clothes ready they were going to be making some money moves tonight. Then she hopped in the shower real quick just to wash the sleep off of herself and become more alert. Tramella reached under her bed and pulled out something she put on for special occasions. Tonight was just that. She then pulled out her pair of wheat-colored Timberland boots, Black True Religion Jeans and a long white tee. Tramella didn't have much in regard to breasts anyway but she did have long nipples so she threw on one of her compression t-shirts under her tee for a smooth look. She wrapped her golden dreads on top of her head, put on her real diamond studs and took a look in her full-length mirror.

"Nigga you fine as fuck!" she said to herself. That nigga Vontavis may have gotten his chocolate skin from his daddy but he got the height, looks, and swag from me. His damn mama! Tramella, or Tra' as she went by on nights like this thought to herself. She walked into her closet and pulled the 9mm pistol from the lockbox and tucked it into the band of her jeans. Tamekia was gon' learn she was the wrong nigga to fuck with.

Chapter Thirty-One

Cassie took a deep breath as she took Keenan's hand and stepped out of the car at the restaurant. The drive over had been dry as hell and he'd played NPR radio the entire ride over. There was a time and a place to talk politics but Cassie just didn't feel like a first date was one of them. It became clear as hell to her that Keenan and her shared very different ideas on the world but she didn't want to completely write him off. At least he actually was aware. Which was more than she could say for Vontavis. She was still pissed he'd ruined her clothes and the first thing in the morning he would be replacing it all. Keenan escorted her inside the building and made a big show with the wait staff that he had reservations. Cassie was slightly embarrassed because he came off really rude and condescending to the staff for no reason at all. She got the distinct feeling he was showing off for her and she couldn't figure out why?

"Cassie, I'd like you to try a really nice wine," Keenan said looking over at her. "Once again, I wanted to tell you how lovely you looked tonight. I will admit, I was a bit worried about what you might wear." He said grinning at her.

"Really? Why?" Cassie asked curiously.

"Well, often times I've found the majority of Black woman love to expose too much of themselves. Tight figure-hugging dresses above their knees, showing cleavage. I just find it so distasteful and degrading. It's nice to know you're not one of "those" Black women." he said laughing so hard at his assessment of Black women he actually snorted. Cassie failed to see the humor and stared at him blankly as she took a sip of her water.

"So I'd like you to try my favorite wine a Shiraz…,"

"Oh no, Keenan, I'm sorry, that actually is my least favorite. I've had it several times, various brands and it's just too dry for my liking."

"Oh no, I insist you try again. You just haven't had the right one."

"Keenan, I just said I didn't like it. Please don't ask again." Cassie replied firmly as she took the menu from the waitress.

"My apologies, I didn't mean to pressure you," Keenan said looking

at her. “But umm, please don’t tell me you’re one of those types of people who thinks cheap Moscato is real wine?” he said leaning in.

Cassie sat back in her chair and looked at Keenan trying to calm herself so she could at least make it through this date. If only to piss Vontavis off for being right. She didn’t want to be out with another man. She would have preferred to be sitting across from Vontavis. But he’d never once asked her out on a real date. She longed to do the simplest things with him but he wasn’t around enough for her. They’d known each other three years and he’d never even made an attempt.

“Actually Moscato is a real wine and there are expensive brands. Just like there is cheap ass Shiraz on the market too.” Cassie replied sassily.

Keenan looked shocked.

“Where is our waitress? I’m hungry.” Cassie said looking him dead in his square ass mouth. Vontavis was right. This nigga looks nerdy as hell now that I see him again. The waitress finally arrived.

“I’ll have…,”

“Oh I’m going to be ordering for both myself and my lady friend here,” He said grinning hard.

Cassie raised her eyebrow at him. Nigga, you do not know me and we’ve spoken a handful of times. What would make you presume to know what I like to eat? Cassie thought.

“We’ll have two salmon specials,” he said looking at the waitress.

“Excuse me, he may want two salmon specials, but I’m going to have the 8oz ribeye steak, asparagus, and a loaded baked potato. I’d like my steak cooked medium-well.” Cassie said as she handed the menu to the waitress who was standing there looking embarrassed for Keenan.

“Umm, sir, did you actually one two salmon special or should I just put in for one?”

Keenan loudly cleared his throat.

“Well, the lady wants what she wants. Make that one salmon special.” He said, his voice was tight. Cassie could tell he was pissed but he did it to himself. Keenan was taking his bossiness to a level she’d never seen before worse than Kerron or Vontavis.

“So how are classes going for you?” Keenan asked Cassie breathed a sigh of relief. Jesus, please let the rest of this date be normal!

“Classes are going well. I’ll admit I’m ready to be done but I want to do well and go even further than a bachelor's degree so I’m taking my time.” Cassie replied. Their waitress came by and sat their drinks down.

Cassie held her glass gingerly. Why the hell did it seem like Keenan was watching her sip? Like he was still upset she wasn’t going to drink his nasty wine.

Honestly, his whole vibe was making her want to act ignorant as hell. Chew with her mouth open or slurp her dink loudly. Just to fuck with his ass because she felt like he was judging her. Contrary to what he may think he knew about her, Cassie had come up in a very good home and been exposed to the finer things her entire life. She knew how to show class. Yes, she'd gone off the rails when she'd met Kerron but she knew better. The conversation was boring this entire date was a bust and she highly doubted she would ever go out with Keenan again. As if on cue her phone buzzed.

"Please excuse me, Keenan, I need to check my phone. My son is with my parents so I like to stay in contact. I hope you don't mind."

"Of course not. It just shows you're a wonderful mother." He said toasting me with his glass. Cassie just smiled. That was certainly nice of him to say but yeah, he was really corny.

Cassie pulled out her cell phone and saw that it wasn't a text from her parents but from Vontavis. Her lips pulled into a frown, only because she knew when she got home she wouldn't be able to look him in the face and lie and say this was a fabulous date. She was going to tell him the truth and he would clown.

Cassie opened the text message and was greeted by a text that read:

"Hurry up and bring your ass home from that nasty ass dinner. I got dessert." Tav

It was accompanied by a picture of the most gorgeous black dick she'd ever seen. Goddamn! Cassie bit her lower lip and squirmed in her seat thinking about how close he'd brought her to the edge a short while ago. Visions of them fucking in the shower crossed her mind and here she was out with some man she wasn't even remotely interested in. The man she wanted was finally in her bed. Cassie sighed loudly.

"Is everything okay?" Keenan asked.

"Yes, he's fine," Cassie replied. Vontavis is really, really fine!

Vontavis smiled when he got a reply text back from Cassie on her date. He was pissed she'd gone but he understood it. Vontavis was well aware the way he moved was peculiar to her and she had a vision in her mind of how things were supposed to go that he didn't fit. But when was she going to realize nothing in her life was going according to schedule yet look at her? Out there living and shit! Vontavis had just come by Tramella's house to grab anything else he felt like he

wanted to take with him. He didn't want any further interaction with her but hopefully, she was asleep. When he raised the garage, he was shocked to find she wasn't even home. Even better. It would give him plenty of time to thoroughly go through Tramella's work laptop and paperwork. He was pretty sure he'd figured out what was going on with Cassie's position at work. He'd spent all afternoon going through her work files and noticed they had Cassie signing off on a lot of paperwork and hours to the state. Vontavis just needed to know how that was a benefit to Morning Star. The only way would be if they had Cassie primed and ready to receive funds from the state or any of the private insurance agencies they billed. It just seemed too odd that in a short amount of time, someone who had no experience was signing off on hours. There was something to it. He just needed a little time to figure it all out. Vontavis walked right into his mother's room and grabbed the laptop out of her bag and began to transfer all the files to use for comparison. Vontavis wasn't worried about her having any dirt on him to use against him with the law. He always made sure he was in the clear and sometimes he handled things differently than he was ordered to. For instance, Cassie was tip-toeing around him wondering had he thrown Schenay and her autistic son out in the street like he'd been ordered to do. Of course, he hadn't done any cruel shit like that. That was just heartless.

What he had done the first week he'd disappeared was as soon as he left Cassie's house, he'd gone over to the rental and helped pack Schenay and her son up with all of their belongings in a U-Haul and driven them to New Jersey where she said she had a friend and helped her get settled in. He felt sorry for the girl and how she'd gotten caught up with his mom's bullshit. Vontavis could admit, he'd seen a lot of the shit Tramella did over the years and a lot of times he didn't feel sorry for these young women. They started out genuinely needing help then they got greedy. But Schenay had even come to him several times asking how she could get away from Tramella. His mom seemed obsessed with her, especially when she said she wanted to quit. Tramella had her hand in all kind of bullshit. Both legal and illegal. Prostitution, drugs you name it. Vontavis just had to pray the Lord forgave him for some of the shit he'd done. Which a lot of times he faked. Unless Tramella was right there watching him that is. If he had to get his hands dirty he did. For a long time, Vontavis felt like it was something he had to do because she was his mother but fuck that. Mickey paid him a lot of money too. Even though Tramella tried to act like it was coming out of her pocket, it wasn't.

So even though Cassie thought he was a thug, yeah he was kinda, but Vontavis was more than that. He had an education, plenty of money in the bank, stocks, bonds, and properties all over. The land

and home he'd purchased in North Carolina for them to start over was just the beginning. The day he opened the door for her to walk inside his mom's crazy house he knew he wanted her to be his. Vontavis thought about moving out plenty of times but why? Tramella talked a lot of shit but why not save his money? All he had was himself. Now he finally felt like I had a reason to start living.

The zip drive transfer was complete and Vontavis looked around a bit more before leaving his mom's room just as he found it and walking down the hall to get the rest of his shit. Vontavis wondered where the hell she was tonight? It was the weekend. Wasn't no telling what Tramella or Tra' as she sometimes went by was up to tonight. Tramella hated for me to see the Tra' side of her.

Vontavis don't know why though? When she was dressed like a nigga, she looked way more comfortable and relaxed than she did any other time. She really thought she was hiding herself from him, but he'd known his mom was different from the day she took him from his dad and brought Vontavis to live with her. He thought she was so uncomfortable admitting that she was a masculine lesbian woman, she only had him around to show off and validate herself to other women. Maybe one of these days she could finally be herself and be happy.

Chapter Thirty-Two

Cassie sat at the table ready to run. The date had been miserable. She was willing to take full responsibility for it. She was so busy trying to run away from what she thought was no good for her, she should have taken the time to really sit and talk with Vontavis. Make him feel comfortable about speaking to her about the reservations he had about being with her instead of always jumping to conclusions. Instead, here she sat, across the table with a bougie negro who had the nerve to tell her that since she hadn't eaten or drank any of his suggestions, he felt it was only fair she paid for everything she ordered. Cassie was too through. While he sat there tallying up the menu, she pulled out her cell phone and called Vontavis.

"Wassup? Are you back home?" Vontavis said upon answering.

"No. Vontavis can you please come pick me up?" Cassie whimpered. She felt so defeated. All the shit she talked and her she was with another man needing him to pick her up. She felt near tears.

"Baby, why are you crying? That nigga ain't try to put his hands on you, did he? Send me the address." Cassie quickly sent him a text letting him know where she was and got up from the table.

"Nigga I'm not paying for shit. You asked me out and chose this place." Cassie said walking away from the table. Vontavis demanded she stay on the line with him until he arrived to get her. Cassie stood outside and just cried. Her life was just in turmoil and she didn't know what to do. She could feel Vontavis was right about everything but she was still scared.

"Cassie!"

Her shoulders jumped as she turned around to find Keenan standing in her face scowling.

"Had I known Franklin Pierce's daughter was no more than a low budget hood rat..,"

Before Keenan could get the rest of the words out of his mouth Vontavis was there and had punched him in the face so hard, Keenan was laying on the ground holding his face while Vontavis issued continuous kicks to his body. Cassie was in complete shock before she

let out a scream and grabbed Vontavis to pull him off.

"Let's go Vontavis," Cassie yelled. We were the only ones outside but she could see a couple making their way outside. Vontavis gave him one final kick and we rushed to the car and took off.

We drove in silence. Every few minutes Vontavis would look at me and cut his eyes.

"Vontavis please slow down," Cassie said softly. Eventually, he pulled over and parked, twisting in his seat to look at her. His eyes never left Cassie's face, he just looked at his fingers tapping his knee in quiet contemplation.

"Cassie don't you ever for as long as you live call me crying. That nigga who you didn't have any business out with tonight anyways could have lost his fuckin' life tonight. Because you called me crying. Do you know all the shit I imagined him doing to you on my way trying to get to you? Do you?" Vontavis shouted.

"I'm sorry Tav."

"Call your mama and check on KJ to make sure he's okay. Then cut that damn phone completely off so we can have this talk you've been wanting me to have. You want a nigga to spill his guts and I'ma give you what you want. Kinda. Just because you seem to need to hear this more than I do. So I'ma give you want you need Cassie."

Cassie quickly called her parents house to check on KJ then did as he said and cut her phone off.

"What do you want to tell me?"

Vontavis almost laughed he could see just wanted him to talk to her. He was going to put her out of her misery tonight.

"Exactly what the fuck I said. Some things you want to hear just because you're a woman and need to hear a man say it. I get. I'm not dumb by any means Cassie. I love you. I'm in love with you and I have been a little bit since the day I laid eyes on you. Your heart already knows that shit though. Your head and your ears needed to hear it. You don't hear me begging you for that type of shit from you because I already know Cassie. You show me through actions you love me. You called yourself going out on a few dates but you know that shit wasn't going nowhere cuz they ain't me."

Cassie crossed her arms and looked at him.

"Well, that must have been nice for you to feel so loved all this time Vontavis, meanwhile you left me in the dark." Cassie snapped.

"Cassie I'm all about actions even when you don't see them. You think you live in one of Tramella's properties. I own that shit. I let her go ahead and manage it. But I own that house. All the rent you've paid is sitting in a bank account untouched. I put a roof over my woman and her son's head because you're my family. Along with the grocery money I give you every week. I just gon' head and let you pay

that other shit so you feel like you're doing something!"

They sat in the car and talked for over two hours where Vontavis let Cassie peel away every layer of him so she could finally know the man she'd fallen in love with. Cassie loved his crazy ass already. I don't know what we were going to call it when she knows everything about me, Vontavis thought.

Chapter Thirty-Three

Prenisha and Sharquita had the niggas in the dog pound going crazy. Tramella didn't know what kinda show Tamekia was putting on before we walked in but it must have been sad. It's a good thing they'd shown up too because Tamekia according to Bryson had already been in the bathroom hiding a good thirty minutes talking about she needed a break according to Bryson. Just because Tamekia had messed shit up for the night I was going to pay the girls out of my pocket. Tra' was there specifically to teach this young hoe a lesson.

"Jose stand outside of this door and don't let anyone in until you hear it from me. I don't give a fuck what you think you here going on in this muthafucka." Tra' said walking into the room and locking it for good measure.

Tramella lightly knocked on the bathroom door.

"Go away! I said I'm done! I'ma give this fuckin' money back!" Tamekia yelled from the other side of the door.

"Tamekia, it's Tramella open the door. I heard there was an issue over here so I came to see if you needed some help," Tramella said as softly as her deep voice would allow. This bitch better hurry up and open this door before I bust this muthafucka open, Tramella thought evilly.

Tamekia didn't give a fuck she was going to be on the outs with Tramella about even being over here. She just wanted to get the fuck out of here! These niggas were wild as hell. All trying to stick their fingers in her pussy and ass, she was scared by the end of the night, these niggas were going to try and run a train on her. No wonder Tramella called these gigs the wolves den and sent security with them. She hadn't thought about that when she'd stolen the gig from Tramella. Tamekia flung open the door and a tall light skin nigga with dreads on the top of his head was standing there. She quickly scanned the room for Tramella.

"Bitch I'm standing right here."

Tamekia's eyes widened. What the fuck? Upon closer inspection, she saw it was Tramella. Damn! Tramella did look kinda good…as a

man! But that was neither here nor there.

Tamekia grabbed her purse from under the bed.

"Let's get the fuck out of here!" Tamekia said attempting to make a run for the door when she was yanked back by her weave and flung on the bed. In seconds Tramella was on her slapping fire out of her ass and punching her.

"Bitch, you think you gon' take food out my mouth? Is that what the fuck you thought you was gon' do?" Tramella hissed in her ear as her large WNBA hands almost squeezed the life out her. Tamekia felt like she was on the brink of consciousness when she felt her shirt being ripped off her body and her shorts being pulled down her hips. Tramella stared down at the voluptuous young THOT and if she actually had a dick, it would have been hard a brick hard. Nah, this young hoe was about to be hers. Mickey was just gon' have to take a back seat. It ain't like he'd care. They'd shared women before.

"Spread those thick thighs for your new nigga girl," Tramella growled.

Tamekia was scared to fuckin' death! Tramella had turned into a real goddamn nigga. She was legit about to be raped by a woman! Tamekia took two seconds to long to spread her legs and Tramella's fist connected with her face again.

"Bitch you gon' learn quick to make shit easy on yourself fuckin' with me," Tramella rasped. With trembling hands and trying to stifle her tears, Tamekia spread her legs. Her legs were shaking so bad, she had no choice but to hold them open for fear of being beaten.

Tramella unzipped her jeans and out popped what had to be a 13inch long, thick strap-on dildo.

"When I'm fuckin' you, call me Tra'" Tramella said grabbing some lubricant out of her back pocket and squirting some over her dick.

An hour later Tamekia sat on the edge of the bed crying. This bitch had beaten and raped her. Tramella kept trying to tell Tamekia that she liked it and that she would get used to it eventually. No bitch I am not gay! Even if I was I wouldn't want you! Tamekia's mind screamed.

This big bitch had literally pulled her jeans back up with her dildo on pretending like she was a damn man. Tamekia's stomach started to churn. She felt like was going to throw up.

Tramella was standing at the edge of the bed and had dumped all the contents of Tamekia's purse including the kilo of cocaine that she was going to attempt to sell tonight before she realized the crowd was way too rowdy for that. Tramella cackled like she'd hit the jackpot while she pocketed every last dollar and coin Tamekia had in her

purse along with a kilo of cocaine and her personal vial! Tramella was leaving her with nothing. Tramella had money and drugs in every pocket.

All of a sudden they could hear loud screaming from outside the door and the sound of running the police busted in with dogs surrounding us.

Tamekia was still naked but threw her hands up.

“Please help me! I’ve just been raped” she cried.

Epilogue- One Year Later

Cassie, Vontavis & KJ

Life for Cassie and Vontavis was good. Cassie was finally settling down and becoming accustomed to southern living. Things with her and Vontavis were exactly how she always thought they would be once he just stayed put and settled down.

Exactly one week after Vontavis had professed his love for her. He finally took her on a date. He'd flown her to Las Vegas and they'd gotten married. Cassie always thought she wanted a big wedding surrounded by a lot of people she really didn't care about but it was just perfect, her and the man she loved exchanging vows to love one another forever. That's all she needed. Vontavis insisted they not stop their lives due to all the madness that had gone on with Tramella's prostitution ring being discovered. She might have gotten a shorter jail sentence had it not been for the fact she'd raped Tamekia and been arrested with a kilo of cocaine on her. That was one smoking gun, the other was the dildo coated in Tamekia's DNA. Her new mother in law was sentenced to 13 years in prison when they were done adding up all the charges.

None of it mattered to Vontavis, he stated he was just happy she got busted on those charges before the state became aware that she was scamming them and it affected Cassie. Vontavis had finally figured out why Tramella was so keen on having Cassie take over things. After Vontavis spoke to Mickey and revealed to him how he felt about Cassie and that he wanted to marry her, Mickey closed out the bank account that contained thousands of dollars that would have led back to Cassie had Tramella been caught. All of that was behind them now.

Cassie was finishing up her nursing degree like she'd wanted to do three years ago. Before leaving Chicago, Vontavis had arranged to meet with Kerron who was still locked up at the time and Kerron had basically sold his son for ten thousand dollars. Cassie was happy and sad about that. Happy they could start their lives with no interruptions from Kerron or his family, but sad that Kerron thought so little of his only child that he would sign away his rights to him. It didn't matter. Vontavis was the only father KJ had ever known anyway and he was wonderful.

Cassie's parents had just left from visiting a week ago and she was shocked to discover how well her parents got along with Vontavis. He was like a whole new person once we left Chicago, he wasn't afraid to show people how smart and intelligent he was. Where Cassie had once thought he was a little weird, he wasn't he just wanted a different life for himself and he finally had it. With her, their son and the baby girl they were expecting in five months.

Tramella

Tramella sat in her cell scrolling Facebook on her illegal cell phone she'd had smuggled in. Tramella still had a team of loyal ones on the outside who always looked out for her. Sharquita and Prenisha were holding things down at Morning Star in her absence. They claimed she was going to be locked up for thirteen years, but Tramella had every intention of being out in five years with good behavior. The second she got out she was going to find that bitch Tamekia and kill that bitch.

"Auntie?"

"Hey, Niece,"

"Do you think I could get a pack of noodles from you? Ain't none of my people came through and put no money on my books," the young incarcerated hoe said. Tramella put her cell phone down and walked over to the steel bar doors and silently appraised the young woman.

"Ain't I your Auntie? Ain't we family?" she asked.

"Yes, we are Auntie!"

Tramella was born with the gift of gab. She knew how to talk to people. The second she went inside, she was making connections, women gravitated to her. After a year she already had a loyal following of young bitches who would kill for her. Tramella grabbed a pack of chicken flavored ramen from her stash and slid it through the bars. Her cell was damn near a commissary. Mickey kept her with the max on her books at all times. He even made the drive to see her with some of the girls when they came.

"Now you know ain't nothing in life free right?"

"I know Auntie. I got you."

Tramella winked and went back to looking at Facebook, it was now her only connection to Vontavis. He looked good, Tramella didn't know about him marrying dumb ass Cassie but she was a pretty girl and Tramella could see the love in her eyes for her only son in the pictures she was constantly posting. Tramella's heart seemed to tighten every time she looked at her child. She'd taken him from his dad when he was 16 years old and Tramella didn't think she'd ever seen her son so genuinely happy. He'd moved his little family down there with his dad. He never wrote to her. Maybe one day his heart

would soften toward her. She hoped.

Schenay

Karma is a muthafuckin' bitch. See you always needed to treat people good. You never knew who talked to who! When Jatori first started working at Morning Star, it was me who trained her and showed her the ropes. So we became fast friends. So much so, that once Vontavis's fine, cool ass got my son and I settled in New Jersey, I'd contacted her. Oh, what a glorious day that was. Jatori spilled all the tea, all it took was a little finessing for me to find the exact location of where she'd left Tamekia. I hurried up and called the police and reported her prostitution ring. I gave them so many details about her I guess they had to send a team out! Tramella had sent me to that location countless times for parties. The icing on the entire fucking cake was the extra years she got tacked on with the drug charges. Ain't God good? Won't he do it? That's exactly where her raping, manly ass needed to be for the rest of her goddamn life if you asked me. All the shit she forced me to do? Making me sleep with her, then when I wouldn't anymore, beating me and throwing me and my child out in the street? Thank God for Vontavis. That bitch Tramella was exactly where the fuck she needed to be. Locked up like an animal.

Bonus Content

Your Grandma, My Side Chick

"Ohhh, yeah, ye-yeah, oooh yeah, just like that, stick that tongue deep up in there…" Ella Mae purred as she tightened her booty hole on Terrence's long, pink tongue. But once she felt its slithery tip plea for entrance into gates of her anus, she relaxed and dropped her guard so she could let the tongue come on in.

Come on in as if she was welcoming Gary, the veteran neighborhood crackhead, to come into the doors of the church to get his soul set, saved and delivered from the demon of his insatiable and rapacious twenty-year crack cocaine addiction. But shit, truth be told, tonight, err, this morning, the reality was that Ella Mae was the one who suddenly found herself cracked the fuck out. She had a newfound addiction.

Getting her ass ate.

And just like trying any drug for the very first time, here now was Ella Mae getting her mind all the way fucked up. As Terrence's tongue crept deeper into her ass walls, Ella Mae was higher than a 1980s flat-booty blonde white bitch at a Rick James afterparty. From the first 'lick", you know a bitch was for sure gonna be hooked.

In her 78 years of existence on Earth, Ella Mae always had a secret burning desire to have a tongue buried deep up in her ass. In all the fifty-two years of committed marriage to her now deceased husband, Fitzgerald, he never bothered once to wrap his lips around her clit and pussy lips, let alone insert a tongue deep up in her ass. Most old school niggas, especially once raised down in the South, were taught to just hit the pussy. Only a few dared to stick their face down there, and if they did, they didn't definitely didn't tell any of their buddies since it was frowned upon. However, nowadays, apparently eating pussy and ass was for new blood – this new generation of young niggas.

But now that Fitzgerald had went on to glory; caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air some six months ago, Ella Mae was ready to get her groceries ate. And if meant she needed to get some "new blood" to do so, well, so be it.

"You like that, huh?" Terrence groaned as he massaged her insides with his damp tongue.

"Oh, yeah, this is a dream come true! Don't stop though, and keep

rubbing my pearl," Ella Mae continued to purr as she squeezed her wrinkled, sagging brown titties and twiddled with her hardened nipples.

"What, you mean to tell me the old man ain't never did this to you, Mae?"

"Nah,"

"Damn…" Slurp. Slurp. "You like that?" Terrence laughed as he slopped his saliva down her asshole and slurped it up.

"Ohhh, shit!" Suddenly Ella Mae's eyes widened and she clenched her mouth. "Excuse my language," she apologized.

"Haha, you trippin," Terrence laughed. "Don't be so uptight, Mae. Sometimes you just gotta live. YOLO…"

Ella Mae smiled and laughed. "I guess you right…YOLO! Now keep eatin' that ass, baby!"

YOLO – That was a term Ella Mae heard all the young folks nowadays using lately in their "raps". Some months she'd asked Kiara, one of her 'babies' – a 22-year-old church member who she taught in Sunday school – what it meant. "It means, 'You Only Live Once', Mother Wilkins," Kiara replied and let out a light laugh. "Ya'll young people a mess," Sister (most people at Mt. Tabor called her Mother) Ella Mae replied. But shit, now that the old man was gone, and Ella Mae was realizing that her number could be called at any time, it was time to 'live'. She was ready to live life to the fullest. Ride bomb dick to the fullest. Get her ass and pussy ate to the fullest. Even toke on some reefur cigarettes and bib on bourbon to the fullest. All the vices her God-fearing, sharecropping tenant mama, pappy and grandmama taught her to avoid growing up on a Willacoochee, Georgia cotton plantation were now being explored.

Terrence, who promptly arrived on time for Ella Mae's 1 AM dick appointment, had no qualms either eating the ass of a 78-year-old. Despite being 29, which was young enough to be her grandson (and possibly even her great-grandson if Ella Mae took the route of her oldest sister and got pregnant at the age of thirteen), Terrence had a thing for older women. And the older the berry, the sweeter the cooch.

As Terrence continued to swirl his tongue in and out Ella Mae's ass cave, he inserted two fingers inside of her vaj and immediately found her love spot. Her lower half clenched in surprise.

"Ohh, sooky sooky now. You puttin' some magic on me," Ella Mae exclaimed with widened eyes overtaking her yellow face.

Although her body was obviously showing the signs of seventy-plus years of life, Ella Mae did her best to keep her body in somewhat good shape. Adamant on still holding onto her Harlem Cotton Club dancer figure, Ella Mae attended Zumba, Gospel Jazzercise, and Tai

Chi three days a week at the Salvation Army's Kroc Recreation Center on 119th street on Chicago's Far South Side.

Ella Mae somewhat resembled Lena Horne. She had medium-length wavy black hair thanks having Cherokee Indian and octaroon (one-eighth white due to her slavemaster ancestry) blood running warm through her veins. Even with a few wrinkles manifest on her face and arms here and there, her yellow skin was relatively tight and it still glistened. Her broad cheekbones, wide, perfect smile, light brown eyes with Jasmine the Arabian Princess eyelashes is what got Fitzgerald hipped to her when they first met back at DuSable High School in Bronzeville in 1955.

"Ok, I'm ready for some dick," Ella Mae snickered, flattered she was allowing herself to be free and obscene with her language.

Terrence pulled his face out of her lower half and propped himself up. He proceeded to take off his white, button down long-sleeved shirt off. He pulled off his black wife beater. Faint yellow light emanating from lamp on the nightstand next to the bed glinted off Terrence's bare chiseled black torso, chest and arms. "My God, My God," Ella Mae moaned. Young bae stood off the bed, pulled his pants and boxers down in unison, revealing his rock-hard tan dick. Ella Mae shook like the Holy Ghost instantly came upon her as if in this very hour was the Day of Pentecost. Just looking at that young dick was going to make Ella Mae definitely speak in tongues. Shondo eih ko bah.

Ella Mae gazed at the dick like a hungry Alabama hound dog and licked her chops. Despite this being her umpteenth dick appointment with Terrence, every time he pulled that young dick out, her body quivered as if it was the first. She was ready to tell someone to hold her mule while she shout.

Terrence hopped his lean naked body back into the high king-sized bed and ambled closer to Ella Mae. He rolled over onto his back so the dick could stand erect and tall like the Washington monument. Ella Mae moved herself closer and admired her young lover's rod. The dick was long and veiny; a stamp-sized birthmark rested on the side. The head was light brown bulbous, already oozing with precum. The shaft was thick in girth.

Fitzgerald never allowed Ella Mae to suck his dick, but now that she had Terrence's dick inches away from her, she was ready to show Terrence what her mouth can do. And yass bitch, with all the pinned up horniness, Ella Mae was going to show this young nicca tonight that her mouth can do more than pray. She wanted to slurp on it like a vanilla ice cream cone from Micky D's. And from from the looks of it, Terrence's ice cream machine wasn't broken. Shit was fully operational this early morning, ready to serve up some of that cream. Ella Mae's mouth watered and her body was on fire the more she

gawked at the dick.

Ella Mae rested her head on Terrence's lower abdomen and kept staring at the dick, so mesmerized this very moment was happening once again. Her pussy was glad to be in service on more time. Mother Wilkins then took her right hand and began to stroke the dick up and down. "My God, now this right here is a dick," she exclaimed. She moved her face closer to the dick and took a whiff of the Irish Spring soap aroma emanating from her soft mound of pubic hair.

Terrence grabbed the back of Ella Mae's head and shoved her head closer to his shaft so she could commence the dick sucking. And without hesitation she did, she gently roamed her lips up and down the shaft. She got up from her side and moved herself in between Terrence's legs so now she go ahead and devour the dick. She spat on it and stroked it up and down in circular motions. Some shit she recently learned from watching some adult movies…Superhead meets Mr. Marcus to be exact.

Suddenly, she gulped on the dick and then did what she never thought she'd ever do in her life. She choked herself on the dick and came up after ten seconds of damn near depriving herself of oxygen. "Damn, Mae. You gettin' better and better at this," Terrence chuckled as he guided her head up and down the shaft.

Ella Mae glided up and down the dick, slurping on it. Terrance closed his eyes, locked his body in place and found himself baptized in elation.

As Sister Ella continued to devour the dick, it was evident by Terrence's hip gyrations that he was on the precipice of delivering the nut inside of her mouth. Ella wanted a taste of the cream, but suddenly Terrence opened his eyes and whisked the dick out of her mouth.

"What? Why you makin' me stop?" Ella asked.

"Ahh, ahhh, don't make me cum," Terrence groaned. He didn't want to bust in the woman's mouth.

"Ok," Ella replied as she wiped her mouth off with her hand which was equally wet. She took that same hand and doused her already soaking wet pussy with the saliva. She was ready to ride this dick. She winched herself up and began to saddle herself on the dick, thumping the head of the dick on top of her pulsating clit. Just as she began to insert the dick in her soppy cooch, she heard some ruffling downstairs at her front door.

Chirp! "FRONT DOOR UNLOCKED", the houses alarm system announced inside the bedroom. "The hell?" Ella Mae threw her attention to the bedroom door.

"Mama! Mama! I can't do it!" Miranda, her only daughter, could be heard screaming in the downstairs foyer.

“Who is that?” Terrence asked in surprise.

“Who you think it is? Who else would call me mama?”

Terrence scrunched his face up. “That’s Sister Miranda?”

“Yes, oh my God. Sweet Jesus!” Ella Mae clutched her mouth.

“Shit!” Terrence growled. “What can I do?”

“Hell, I don’t know. Hide! Go run into my closet! Now! Grab your clothes too!” Ella Mae whispered, commanding Terrence to take off hiding with his clothes in hand. Doing as she instructed, Terrence followed suit and quickly dashed his still naked body into the long walk-in closet feet away.

Pregnant By My Granddaddy's Boyfriend

“Suck that shit, bae! Uggghhhhhh! Don’t nobody— ugh ugh—suck my shit — ughhhh— like youuuuuuuu! Fuuuuuuuccccccck!”

Heavy masculine moans echoed through the dimly lit room. It was a sweet, sensual and erotic melody that had been heard nightly since the day Lil P considered the luckiest day of his life.

Lil’ P was in heaven; enraptured in unending bliss. His brown, slightly hairy ass hung slightly off the edge of the beige leather couch that sat in the center of the mostly unfurnished back living room. An almost finished bottle of Hennessy Black in his left hand and a peach-flavored Philly blunt filled with some of the most potent herb in the right.

Taking the bottle of Hennessy to the head, he finished the corner that was left and dropped it to the floor. It clattered loudly, but that didn’t deter anything. As he hit the Girl Scout Cookie strain, holding the smoke in his chest as long as he could, he used his now free hand to grab a handful of hair, lifting his waist until his hard, veiny dick was hitting tonsils.

Slurp-Slurp-Slurp-Slurp.

That was sound of the mouthful, up and down sticky gulps that matched the harmony of Lil P’s nonstop moans. And tonight, as usual, that was that could be heard in the relatively quiet trap house on 79th street – Chicago’s South Side.

79th street was one of the most dangerous streets on Chicago’s South Side. Known also as “The Nine” in the streets of ChiRaq, 79th was filled with an orchestra of gunshots, distant and fading police and ambulance sirens, homeless winos, catty THOT bitches, hustling crackheads and other familiar sounds that defined typical street life in the city.

Occasionally one would hear the sounds of dope boy soldiers loitering the streets, looking to up their clout by upping the blickies. Hence the intermittent gunfire that would as usual send some of those soldiers to their early yet predictable graves.

But one of those dope boys – one who bragged and purported to be one of the biggest in town, Lil P, was nestled comfortably on the Nine in one of his many trap houses. And Lil P wasn’t worried at all about the unending gang clout wars raging outside. He was more concerned

with the moment at hand as he watched his beloved get down on his shaft.

Any other night Lil P would've been counting dollars, stacking kilos of raw coke or scag or just simply shooting dice with some of his niggas. But tonight, with none of his guys with him, he was producing moans and groans as he was now the recipient of the sloppiest head known to man.

With the groans and slurps still bouncing off the walls of the damn near dark room, so did shadows of those inside the room. Although there was a tiny lamp in the corner of the room providing some damp visibility, the real light was fluorescent streetlight outside the window. It was only light shone on the scene in the back living room of the trap house.

Lil P on the verge of climax had been secretly getting down like this now for the past few weeks. Since meeting buddy off Grindr, the infamous gay dating and hook-up phone app, the dick sucking sessions turned into the best thing that had ever happened to him.

"Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! I'm 'bout to cum, nigga!" Lil P hollered.

"Give me that nut, zaddy! I'm ready for it," the dick sucker responded as a thick layer of saliva encircled his mouth and dripped down his chin.

"AHHHHHH!" Lil P growled as he emptied his big brown nuts, shooting the thickest river of nut down the dude's mouth.

Sitting back on his heels, Zay came into view, his face finally detached from Lil P's waist. Licking the corners of his mouth, he caught the few drops of nut that had slipped free when Lil P fired his kids down his throat.

Zay wiped his saliva-covered hands on the back of his pants. He popped his mouth and snickered at Lil P. "Damn, your babies taste good," Zay joked as he still stroked Lil P's throbbing shaft.

"Shit, nigga. You fuckin' making me question everything about life," Lil P lightly grumbled as he tried to get a control over his heavy breaths. Guess the head really did a number to him.

"Now, bend over, fuck nigga," Zay commanded, standing to his feet and dropping his skinny jeans and massaging his already hard light brown dick.

Just like that, Zay's smiled turned into a seductive menacing scowl. It was part of the act to suddenly go from submission to domination. It was his turn to make Lil P obey.

Zay's sexy, menacing look coupled his hazel green eyes turning to inviting slits excited Lil P the same way it had when they'd met in this same room to hook-up almost a month ago.

Quickly kicking off his Timbs, Lil P didn't hesitate rising and stepping out of his jeans. He licked his lips seductively as he took in

the man in front of him that he was slowly finding himself falling for. Zay was tall. 6'2" to Lil P's 5'10", and he towered over him like the real man that he was. With his light skin seeming to glow in the dim light, the "Only God Can Judge Me" tattoo etched on the Zay's left pec of his chest was clearly visible. His long, curly hair was normally in big twists hanging past his shoulders in a wild 'fro. But tonight Lil P fucked it up as he would grab the hair to guide Zay's head in pleasure. Zay smirked, noticing the familiar look in Lil P's eyes. He was in love and would do any and everything that he wanted. Well, any and everything but claim them in public. Typical trade-DL shit that Zay was used to.

Zay hated closet men. He hated, even more, the way they could look at him with so much love, take the dick with more passion than any bitch, but would nut the fuck up on him if he even spoke to them in the daytime. Posin' ass nigga, Zay thought to himself knowing he'd made the right decision for what he was about to do next.

Assuming the position, Lil P bent over the arm of the couch, spreading his legs and using his hands to part his ass cheeks for easy entry. Usually, Zay would use lube, but tonight, he didn't give a fuck and had the full desire to cause Lil P anything but pain.

Zay grabbed Lil P's toned waist and shook his head in slight disgust. Not because he was about raw dog the dope boy with no lube, but because it turned out Lil P was actually a big liar. Lil P gave Zay the impression he was a big-time kingpin doing big numbers, but after doing his research, Zay quickly discovered Lil P was nothing more than one pay grade above a corner boy. Zay thought about it for a second, and then thought how it would be uncomfortable even for himself to not use some lubrication, so he opted to then using some slight saliva. He drooled some spit into Lil P's booty hole and massaged it in. Regardless of lube or not, this nigga was about to get fucked in more ways than one, and in Zay's mind, he deserved everything that was coming to him.

Knowing time was running out, because the real boss nigga, Lil P's employer, would be coming to pick up the week's profits, Zay squatted down, lined his dick up with the opening of Lil P's ass, and slid the head in. When he felt Lil P's booty walls tightly conform around his shaft, his eyes almost rolled back in his head. Focus, Zay. Gawhwdamn, this ass felt good but, focus nigga, he coached himself. Remembering his purpose, he shoved the rest of his dick into Lil P's surprisingly wet and gooey booty guts. Seemed like Lil P really did now have a boipussy.

"Damn baby! Hol'up!" Lil P hollered like the bitch that he was, his hands falling to the sides and his legs getting weak from the force that he was being fucked.

Zay didn't listen. Instead, he continued to ferociously ram his dick in and out hard and fast. When Lil P got his bearings, he pressed his knees up against the side of the couch and started throwing it back on his lover. Relaxing his ass cheeks, he twerked in a way that would make a stripper throw a stack at his ass, his hole getting wetter and wetter with each stroke.

Zay let go of Lil P's right hip, slapping his ass so hard it jiggled. Slap! Slap! Slap! Slap! Whap! Zay threw more slaps at the jiggly ass that he was now beginning to realize was getting slightly bigger since the first time he tapped it. Lil P had told Zay his favorite exercise in the gym was squats because he wanted to get a bigger ass for him.

"Ooooh, I love you, Zay," Lil P confessed, gripping the cushions of the couch that he was being drilled into. "Zay, did— ahhhhhh— you hear me? I said I love you," he muttered again.

He wanted to hear the words back. He needed to hear them. He was ready to risk it all and announce his love for this man to the world. Zay's head and dick had him turned out. What was just supposed to be a hookup had turned into what he felt was the beginning of finding the man he would spend the rest of his life with...at least on the low.

Slap! Slap! Slap

Zay was silent. The feeling wasn't mutual and he wasn't about to lie like it was. Leaning down his body, he pinned Lil P in the ass up position. He wrapped both his hands around his throat and licked his ear. Feeling resistance from Lil P, he used his body weight to keep him from moving, driving his dick deeper and deeper into his ass.

Crrrreeeeeaakkkk.

The door opened loudly, making Lil P begin to struggle to get up from beneath Zay's weight. It was no use though. He was trapped in a compromising position. Zay put more pressure around Lil P's throat, his lips still against his ear.

"What's the code to the safe," he commanded.

Seconds later, Lil P's eyes bugged damn near out of his head when he realized what was going on. He tried even harder to buck Zay off of him, but he had him in a position where he had no leverage, and the twenty pound they differed in weight had him at a disadvantage as well.

"You're late, nigga" Zay said over his shoulder, never missing a stroke. Time was of the essence and he didn't tolerate tardiness. In his business, a few seconds could be the difference between life and death.

"Uhhhhh, nigga, you couldn't finish this nastygay shit before I got here?" Lennox asked with a disgusting scowl buried deeply into the features of his face as he took in the scene before him.

“The code to the safe,” Zay demanded of Lil P again, feeling his nut rise.

He could smell the fear mixing with the sweat that leaked from Lil’ P’s body from the fuck he was puttin down on him. Knowing that, even if Lennox didn’t want to see what they were doin’, having a spectator turned the exhibitionist in Zay on even more. He went harder, drillin’ Lil P almost speechless. His grip around his throat tightening even more.

“I ain’t tellin’ yo’ faggot ass shit!” Lil’ P managed to get out, making both Zay and Lennox laugh at his ass.

“Did this nigga just call you a faggot while he gettin’ his guts beat in from the back?” Lennox asked in disbelief.

Zay just laughed louder and shook his head. He was used to this, but he had to admit that it pissed him off. His aggression coming through in the violent pumps leading to him releasing inside of Lil P’s ass. “AHHH!” He moaned as he came, but kept himself locked deep inside Lil P.

“I’mma ask you again,” he said, “just one more time, though. I ain’t tryna hurt you cause I kinda like ya lil ass. What’s the code to the safe?”

Zay finally rose off of Lil P, who could barely stand, and pulled his pants up, walking around to the front of the couch beside Lennox. Lil P rolled onto the couch to face his robbers. Looking at Zay with hurt in his eyes, he didn’t pay Lennox any attention. He didn’t owe him shit, but he thought that what he and Zay had was something special.

“Fuck you!” he snapped, trying to hide the tears in his eyes.

“Is this lil’ nigga finna cry? Zay! This lil nigga finna cry!” Lennox pointed out, waving the glocks he had in both hands in Lil P’s direction.

Zay wasn’t moved. He kept a close eye on Lil P because he had a feeling he wasn’t going to just let them walk out of there with the money. The way he’d explained it to Zay if they got robbed, they lost their lives, so he’d rather go down fighting.

“P, don’t be stupid, nigga. Just gimme the code to the safe so we can get the fuck outta here. I don’t wanna have to hurt you,” Zay tried to reason with him, noticing Lil P reaching in the cushion of the couch.

Jumping forward, he grabbed Lil’ P’s hand, snatching the gun he knew was hidden in the couch from him.

Whack! Whack!

With two heavy licks to the face, he caught Lil P, breaking his nose, and making his left eye swell instantly from the gash on top of it. He’d tried to do this the easy way, but Lil P was gone make him have to fuck him up.

“I’mma ask you one more time, P. You might as well tell me and lemme take ya ass out in a humane way. We all know how that nigga Preech get down. You gon’ die today either way. So, what’s the code to the muthafuckin’ safe?” Zay asked through gritted teeth.

Lennox stood by, moving slightly to the side, his guns aimed at Lil’ P’s bare chest. The scene before him was unreal. These two gay ass men on a beige leather couch in a trap house; Zay’s big ass straddling Lil P with a gun to his temple now. Shit, truth be told, you never would’ve suspected either of them being gay if you’d seen them in the streets. Shaking his head, he saw tears mixed with blood running down Lil P’s face, and couldn’t help but shake his head, because he’d remembered several instances where P had embarrassed him in front of his crew. If they could see his ass now, Lennox thought, smiling because he’d already taken some video of Zay fuckin’ his ass into submission to expose his ass after they hit this lick.

“Th-th-three. Tweeeenty-twooooo. Twelllve,” Lil P wept, knowing that Zay was right, and he was gon’ die either way. He’d rather it be at the hands of his lover, the man he loved, that he thought loved him too than his boss man who would make an example out of his ass and torture him for days before feeding him to his dogs just alive enough to feel his body be torn apart.

Nodding at Lennox, Zay stayed in Lil P’s lap while the only picture in the entire house was taken from the wall, and the code was punched in. When the safe beeped and the seal released on the safe, hissing as it opened, he winked at Lil P before pointing the gun in his face.

“Open up and suck this shit,” he ordered, remembering Lil P calling him a faggot earlier. He was just gon’ shoot him in the head, but now, he had a point to prove.

Lil P shook his head, trying to hold onto the little bit of dignity he had left. He might take it in the ass, but he’d put nothin’ in his mouth other than a blunt, food and liquor. That wasn’t the way he was about to go out.

Whack!

Another lick to the face made Lil P’s mouth swing open and Zay pushed the gun into his mouth forcefully. “Suck this shit!”

Reluctantly, Lil P did what he was told, looking on as Zay seemed to get some kind of pleasure from the torture. Behind them, Lennox had emptied the safe of all the money that was in there, smiling the whole time, because he didn’t expect the take to be as big as it was. He’d counted a hundred thou, in stacks and he and Zay were splitting that shit down the middle.

“Aye, I go it all. Let’s get outta here fo’ they come!” Lennox yelled at Zay’s back, slinging the two duffels over his shoulders and making a

dash for the door.

POW!

The sound of a gun firing made Lennox stop in his tracks and turn around to make sure Zay was good. Standing up off of Lil P's body, his brains blown onto the wall behind the couch, Zay took the top shirt he was wearing and wiped the blood and brain matter from his face. He threw it over Lil P's face, well what was left of the shit, before walking calmly past a stunned Lennox out the door. I gotta remember to never piss this nigga off, Lennox thought looking back at Lil P before running to catch up with his partner's long-legged strides out the back of the house and to their car parked a few blocks down.

About Quan Millz

QUAN MILLZ is the profound and prolific writer from the sizzling streets of Miami, Florida. Now residing between Chicago, Illinois and Los Angeles, California, he's known for his gritty, graphic and gut-punching urban tales that depict the real and rawness of black urban life. His deeply detailed and visual storytelling talent gives readers a view of the rollercoaster of emotions that many endure when trying to climb their way out of dark struggles in the inner city. He's the author of the Gutter Hoe Dreams and Crack Hoe Dreams series.

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